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Patricia R. Hitt

FROM PRECINCT WORKER TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

Regional Oral History Office
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Patricia Reilly Hitt
Washington, D.C.
February, 1968

Regional Oral History Office
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University of California
Berkeley, California

Women in Politics Oral History Project

Patricia R. Hitt

FROM PRECINCT WORKER TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

With an Introduction by
Robert Finch

An Interview Conducted by
Miriam Stein
in 1977

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TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Patricia R. Hitt

PREFACE	i
INTRODUCTION by Robert H. Finch	v
INTERVIEW HISTORY	viii
BRIEF BIOGRAPHY	ix
I BACKGROUND	1
Family	1
Education and Goals	8
Family Goals and Guidelines	8
Whittier High School and the University of Southern California	11
Marriage, Family, and Civic Affairs	18
II REPUBLICAN ORGANIZATIONS	25
Federation of Republican Women	25
County and State Activities	25
Lelia Baeskins	30
Other Federation Leaders	32
A Dispute Over Pre-primary Endorsements	36
The Schlafly-O'Donnell Dispute	41
County and State Central Committees	51
Troubles with the John Birch Society	51
Committee Leaders	55
III REPUBLICAN CONVENTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS	57
The 1946 Nixon Campaign and the Committee of One Hundred	57
The Nixon Senatorial Campaign, 1950	59
The Eisenhower-Nixon Ticket, 1952	62
The Nixon Fund and its Aftermath	62
Some Campaign Leaders in California	66
The Big Switch, 1958	68
Some Observations About Being a Woman in Politics	73
Responsibilities in Politics	73
Women as Fundraisers	78
1960: Nixon versus Kennedy	80
Becoming National Committeewoman	80
At the Republican National Convention	89
The Campaign	89
Some Observations on the Nixon Defeat	96

1962: Nixon for Governor	100
The Campaign	100
The Aftermath	103
The 1964 Republican National Convention and Campaign	107
Hostess to the Convention	107
The George Murphy Senatorial Campaign	114
The Republican State Central Committee Convention and Election, 1968: the Growing Threat From the Right	123
The Robert Finch Campaign, 1966	129
Richard Nixon for President, 1968	133
Organizing "Women for Nixon"	133
The Convention	136
Setting Strategy	141
Women for Nixon-Agnew and Women for Nixon-Agnew Advisory Committee	143
 IV ASSISTANT SECRETARY, FIELD SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, 1969-1972	 159
The Appointment	159
Leaving HEW	160
Responsibilities	169
Being A Woman in Public Office	176
School Integration	183
On Delegations Abroad	186
The Tubman Funeral	186
The Rockefeller Mission to South America	189
The Soviet Union	191
Some HEW Programs	191
Volunteer Action	191
Child Care	193
Consumer Education	195
Staff Members	196
Deputies	196
Civil Servants	199
Family Life	202
 V REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN IN POLITICS	 206
 VI RETURN TO CALIFORNIA	 217
 INDEX	 222

PREFACE

The following interview is one of a series of tape-recorded memoirs in the California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project. The series has been designed to study the political activities of a representative group of California women who became active in politics during the years between the passage of the woman's suffrage amendment and the current feminist movement--roughly the years between 1920 and 1965. They represent a variety of views: conservative, moderate, liberal, and radical, although most of them worked within the Democratic and Republican parties. They include elected and appointed officials at national, state, and local governmental levels. For many the route to leadership was through the political party--primarily those divisions of the party reserved for women.

Regardless of the ultimate political level attained, these women have all worked in election campaigns on behalf of issues and candidates. They have raised funds, addressed envelopes, rung doorbells, watched polls, staffed offices, given speeches, planned media coverage, and when permitted, helped set policy. While they enjoyed many successes, a few also experienced defeat as candidates for public office.

Their different family and cultural backgrounds, their social attitudes, and their personalities indicate clearly that there is no typical woman political leader; their candid, first-hand observations and their insights about their experiences provide fresh source material for the social and political history of women in the past half century.

In a broader framework their memoirs provide valuable insights into the political process as a whole. The memoirists have thoughtfully discussed details of party organization and the work of the men and women who served the party. They have analysed the process of selecting party leaders and candidates, running campaigns, raising funds, and drafting party platforms, as well as the more subtle aspects of political life such as maintaining harmony and coping with fatigue, frustration, and defeat. Perceived through it all are the pleasures of friendships, struggles, and triumphs in a common cause.

The California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project has been financed by both an outright and a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Matching funds were provided by the Rockefeller Foundation for the Helen Gahagan Douglas component of the project, by the Columbia and Fairtree Foundations, and by individuals who were interested in supporting memoirs of their friends and colleagues. In addition, funds from the California State Legislature-sponsored Knight-Brown Era Governmental History Project made it possible to increase the research and broaden the scope of the interviews in which there was

a meshing of the woman's political career with the topics being studied in the Knight-Brown project. Professors Judith Blake Davis, Albert Lepawsky, and Walton Bean have served as principal investigators during the period July 1975-December 1977 that the project was underway. This series is the second phase of the Women in Politics Oral History Project, the first of which dealt with the experiences of eleven women who had been leaders and rank-and-file workers in the suffrage movement.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of the West and the nation. The Office is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library. Interviews were conducted by Amelia R. Fry, Miriam Stein, Gabrielle Morris, Malca Chall, Fern Ingersoll, and Ingrid Scobie.

Malca Chall, Project Director
Women in Politics Oral History Project

Willa Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

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CALIFORNIA WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

- Frances Mary Albrier, *Determined Advocate for Racial Equality*. 1979, 308 p.
- Odessa Cox, *Challenging the Status Quo: The Twenty-seven Year Campaign for Southwest Junior College*. 1979, 149 p.
- March Fong Eu, *High Achieving Nonconformist in Local and State Government*. 1977, 245 p.
- Jean Wood Fuller, *Organizing Women: Careers in Volunteer Politics and Government Administration*. 1977, 270 p.
- Elizabeth Rudel Gatov, *Grassroots Party Organizer to Treasurer of the United States*. 1978, 412 p.
- Patricia Hitt, *From Precinct Worker to Assistant Secretary of HEW*. 1980, 220 p.
- Kimiko Fujii Kitayama, *Nisei Leader in Democratic Politics and Civic Affairs*. 1979, 110 p.
- Bernice Hubbard May, *A Native Daughter's Leadership in Public Affairs*. Two volumes, 1976, 540 p.
- Hulda Hoover McLean, *A Conservative's Crusades for Good Government*. 1977, 174 p.
- Julia Porter, *Dedicated Democrat and City Planner, 1941-1975*. 1977, 195 p.
- Wanda Sankary, *From Sod House to State House*. 1979, 109 p.
- Hope Mendoza Schechter, *Activist in the Labor Movement, the Democratic Party, and the Mexican-American Community*. 1979, 165 p.
- Vera Schultz, *Ideals and Realities in State and Local Government*. 1977, 272 p.
- Clara Shirpser, *One Woman's Role in Democratic Party Politics: National, State, and Local, 1950-1973*. Two volumes, 1975, 671 p.
- Elizabeth Snyder, *California's First Woman State Party Chairman*. 1977, 199 p.
- Eleanor Wagner, *Independent Political Coalitions: Electoral, Legislative, and Community*. 1977, 166 p.
- Carolyn Wolfe, *Educating for Citizenship: A Career in Community Affairs and the Democratic Party, 1906-1976*. 1978, 254 p.
- Rosalind Wyman, *"It's a Girl:" Three Terms on the Los Angeles City Council, 1953-1965; Three Decades in the Democratic Party, 1948-1979*. 1979, 150 p.

Interviews in Process

Marjorie Benedict, Pauline Davis, Ann Eliaser, Elinor R. Heller, Lucile Hosmer, La Rue McCormick, Emily Pike, Carmen Warschaw, Mildred Younger.

The Helen Gahagan Douglas Component of the California Women Political Leaders
Oral History Project

In four volumes, in process

Volume I: *The Political Campaigns*

Discussion primarily of the 1950 Senate campaign and defeat, in interviews with Tilford E. Dudley, India T. Edwards, Leo Goodman, Kenneth R. Harding, Judge Byron F. Lindsley, Helen Lustig, William Malone, Alvin P. Meyers, and Frank Rogers.

Volume II: *The Congress Years, 1944-1950*

Discussion of organization and staffing; legislation on migrant labor, land, power and water, civilian control of atomic energy, foreign policy, the United Nations, social welfare, and economics, in interviews with Juanita E. Barbee, Rachel S. Bell, Albert S. Cahn, Margery Cahn, Evelyn Chavoor, Lucy Kramer Cohen, Arthur Goldschmidt, Elizabeth Wickenden Goldschmidt, Chester E. Holifield, Charles Hogan, Mary Keyserling, and Philip J. Noel-Baker.

Volume III: *Family, Friends, and the Theater: The Years Before and After Politics*

Discussion of Helen and Melvyn Douglas and their activities at home with their family and among friends, and their work in the theater and movies, in interviews with Fay Bennett, Walter Gahagan, Cornelia C. Palms, Walter R. Pick, and Alis DeSola.

Volume IV: *Congresswoman, Actress, and Opera Singer*

Helen Gahagan Douglas discusses her background and childhood; Barnard College education; Broadway, theater and opera years; early political organization and Democratic party work; the congressional campaigns, supporters; home and office in Washington; issues during the Congress years, 1944-50; the 1950 Senate campaign against Richard M. Nixon, and aftermath; women and independence; occupations since 1950; speaking engagements, travel to Russia, South America, Liberia inauguration, civic activities, life in Vermont.

INTRODUCTION

Patricia Reilly Hitt is an extraordinary human being. During the early and mid-nineteen sixties, when her partisan political activities were moving in full stride, she defined a role as an effective activist woman which could only be applauded in the nineteen seventies and can only be further appreciated in the eighties.

I first became aware of Pat Hitt in the early stages of the 1960 Presidential campaign. A stream of reports came from California about this "prodigious campaigner" from Whittier. Thus, in June, 1960 it was foregone that when Rosemary Woods suggested Pat Hitt as a possible candidate for the Republican National Committeewoman from California, she moved to that critical post. I worked with her intermittently when she held that position and in support of Nixon when he chose to run for Governor of California in 1962 -- a decision both of us had strongly opposed.

After the 1962 defeat, when Nixon departed for New York, George Murphy decided to run for the Senate seat then held by Clair Engle when it was clear that Engle's illness was terminal. Because George was a good friend of ours, Pat and I enlisted in that campaign; she as women's chairman, I as overall campaign chairman. It could hardly be said that George was given much of a chance for victory, but the Republican party was in such disarray after the defeats of 1958-1960 and 1962 that it seemed to us that this campaign -- with George's unique qualities -- could be a major force in pulling the party together and building toward the future.

In retrospect, that 1964 Senatorial campaign was enormous fun! With limited funds and a marvelous crew of volunteers, we seized on the mistakes of Cranston and Salinger to pull an upset of major proportions. Pat played a major role in this effort. She was indefatigable. She worked 18 hours a day covering the state like a blanket in organizing and fund-raising.

Out of the campaign, it seemed a logical next step for me to run for lieutenant governor in the 1966 election. It was clear that the battle for the Republican nomination for governor would be hotly contested and perhaps divisive. I did not have enough name recognition or private resources to seek the top spot, but I could attempt to act as a unifying and stabilizing element at the second level. Pat agreed and again she performed magnificently in shaping a campaign that achieved more votes than even Reagan in the general election. In this connection, it must

be said that to the extent anyone "managed" my 1966 campaign, it was Pat Hitt. But it is the mark of Pat's deft ability to move people that she needs no formal role in any enterprise with which she is involved. Her integrity, her enthusiasm and her enormous energy provide the catalyst to set others happily to work.

As 1968 approached, I was busily engaged as Lieutenant Governor of California when Pat went to work as National Co-Chairman for Richard Nixon's Presidential campaign. What she had done so superbly in California she now repeated on the much larger, more difficult canvas of a national election, and it can be fairly said that she and her husband Bob played crucial roles in the early going of Richard Nixon's great come-back effort.

When the President-elect offered me my choice of Cabinet positions, I took HEW. I knew I wanted and needed Pat Hitt in that huge "people" department. Thus it was that Pat became the first and highest-ranking woman of the Nixon administration.

In my time as Secretary of HEW when I was having as much trouble with certain selected staff at the White House as I was with a hostile Democrat-controlled Congress, I relied heavily on Pat all across the organizational, programatic, and political spectrum. As the Assistant Secretary in charge of the district offices, she was an invaluable resource in keeping me abreast of the galaxy of problems within the orbit of the Department across the country. With the wisdom of hindsight, it has occurred to me that the wisest move I might have made at the outset of my tenure at HEW would have been to make Pat liaison with 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. It might not have avoided Watergate, but it would have certainly reduced friction.

Our activities together covered so many fronts, time does not allow even a summary, but one exercise in particular gave us unique satisfaction. At HEW, Pat and I had begun a strong thrust toward strengthening bilingual programs in education with Spanish as a second language. (Please note this was not Spanish instead of English but "in addition to.") Because of the nature of California politics, we were not unaware of the growing importance of the Spanish-speaking vote. In 1970 when the President asked me to head a Cabinet committee on the Spanish-speaking, I did so but insisted Pat head the programatic

side. She did a superb job and it must be noted that Nixon in 1972 received more than 30% of that vote.

Pat's other contributions and talents as mother, wife, homemaker and volunteer in educational and charitable efforts are self-evident and noteworthy, but I have only dealt here with her skills as a "political" leader -- and I use that term in its best sense.

Most recently (in 1979), I appointed Pat as a member of a select committee to help save the accreditation of a prestigious university in Southern California and, as always, she performed with great diligence and skill and the outcome was successful.

I have not read the interviews which make up this Hitt collection. I look forward to that opportunity with enthusiasm. Such an effort must chronicle the remarkable achievements of an extraordinary woman at a tumultuous time in our nation's history.

ROBERT H. FINCH

10 December 1979
Pasadena, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Patricia R. Hitt was interviewed by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library as part of its Women Political Leaders Project in order to record her recollections of her rich and active career in Republican women's organizations, the Republican party, and the federal government. She has served at virtually every level of the California Federation of Republican Women, played an active role in numerous Republican state and national campaigns, served as GOP National Committeewoman from California, and, as assistant secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, was the highest ranking woman in President Nixon's first administration.

A series of three interviews was held in the spring and summer of 1977, on May 18 and 19, and on July 27, at Mrs. Hitt's spacious home in Laguna Beach, California, which offered a sweeping vista of the Pacific Ocean.

In preparation for the interviews, Mrs. Hitt had gathered together her collection of scrapbooks and files and made these available to the interviewer to review before the tape recording sessions. The interviews themselves were marathons, lasting several hours each, but Mrs. Hitt launched into them with gusto, her energy never flagging as her memory ranged over the wide diversity of events in her career. The papers remain in Mrs. Hitt's private possession.

The transcripts of the tape recordings were lightly edited for clarity by the interviewer, then sent to Mrs. Hitt for her revisions and corrections. She carefully reviewed the manuscript, a process complicated in its midst by her move to Corona Del Mar, California.

This important memoir offers insight and perspective on the position and power of women in Republican politics during the last three decades.

Miriam F. Stein
Interviewer-Editor

10 December 1979
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Presidential Appointee to:

President's Commission on
White House Fellows



Member:

Board of Trustees, Whittier College
Board of Trustees, Chapman College
Board of Trustees, L.A. Orthopaedic
Hospital
Calif. Council for Economic and
Environmental Balance

PATRICIA REILLY HITT

Assistant Secretary for Community and Field Services

Patricia Reilly Hitt was named January 21, 1969, by President Nixon as Assistant Secretary for Community and Field Services, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The first woman appointed to the new Administration, Mrs. Hitt is one of its highest-ranking women.



PATRICIA REILLY HITT

career. Also, her activities related to education have included: Member, President's Development Committee and Board of Governors, Chapman College; Member, Citizens' Committee for Better Schools (to assist Orange Board of Education); Member, Board of Directors, Orange PTA; Past President, Villa Park School PTA; and Member, Board of Directors, Corona Del Mar PTA.

Politically, Mrs. Hitt began working as a block worker ringing doorbells in Richard Nixon's first campaign for the House of Representatives in 1946. Her most recent political assignment was that of National Co-Chairman, Nixon-Agnew Campaign,

1968—the first and only time any woman has been co-chairman of a national presidential campaign for either party. In addition, she served as Republican National Committeewoman for California and as a member, Executive Committee of the Republican National Committee, 1960-64; State Director, Women's Activities for Senator George Murphy, 1964; Leadership Training Chairman, State Board of California Federation of Republican Women, 1965-67; State Co-Chairman, Robert Finch Campaign (Lt. Governor), 1966; and Member, California Republican State Central Committee, 1958-70.

Other interests and activities include: Member of Delta Gamma; founded Delta Gamma Junior Alumnae organization for Los Angeles County and served as first president; Member, USC Town and Gown Junior Auxiliary; Member, P.E.O. Sisterhood; and Member, Orange County Trojan League. She is the recipient of Delta Gamma's Order of the Rose. Also, she is the recipient of the *Los Angeles Times* Woman of the Year Award, 1969, for outstanding achievement and service; and the recipient of the Theta Sigma Phi Woman in the News Award, Los Angeles, 1969. From 1952 to the present, Mrs. Hitt has been a partner in the Miller-Hitt Company of California and participates as an owner in Reilly Holdings, an investment company in California. Also, Mrs. Hitt is a Member, Board of Directors, the Richard M. Nixon Foundation, a group whose responsibility it is to choose the site, raise the money, and make plans for the Nixon Library which will be built after President Nixon leaves office.

Mrs. Hitt is listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in American Women*, *Who's Who in the West*, and *Who's Who in American Politics*.

The wife of Robert J. Hitt, Mrs. Hitt has two grown sons and ~~one grandson~~ grandchildren.

(As Assistant Secretary, she is responsible for coordinating the work of the ten Regional Field Offices of the Department. This responsibility is directly supervised for Mrs. Hitt by Deputy Assistant Secretaries Dr. Paul L. Niebanck (Policy) and William Bronstein (Operations). Also, through these two deputies, Mrs. Hitt is responsible for urban assistance through the HEW model cities activity and for regional development.

(In addition, Mrs. Hitt assists and advises the Secretary in coordinating Department efforts in youth affairs, consumer services, and mental retardation. Under Mrs. Hitt, Deputy Assistant Secretary Stanley B. Thomas, Jr., has direct responsibility for Youth and Student Affairs, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Barbara M. Burns oversees the operation of Consumer Services. Deputy Assistant Secretary Ray B. Chambers assists Mrs. Hitt in the administrative responsibility for Community and Field Services.

(She also serves as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Federal Woman's Award.

Born in Taft, California, Mrs. Hitt was educated in the public schools in Whittier and received her B.S. degree in Education from the University of Southern California. She is a recipient of the USC Alumni Merit Award for 1972. Also, she holds honorary doctorates from Chapman College, Orange, California, and from Whittier College, Whittier, California.

Mrs. Hitt has been active for many years in community, educational, and political affairs. In her community work, her activities have included: Founder, Newport Harbor Woman's Civic Club; Member, Board of Directors, Assistance League of Orange; Member, Board of Directors, National Assistance League; Member, Orange Chamber of Commerce, Committee on Growth and Development of Urban Areas; Governor's appointee to Commission of the Californias; Member, U.S.-Mexico Commission for Border Development and Friendship; and an active participant in Community Chest, Red Cross, March of Dimes, YWCA, and Boy Scouts.

In the education field, Mrs. Hitt was owner-operator of a nursery school in Laguna Beach, California, early in her

I BACKGROUND

Family

Stein: Well, let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born?

Hitt: I was born in Taft, California on January 24, 1918. My family moved to Southern California soon afterwards, so that I was raised in the town of Whittier, which is part and parcel of what happened to me later.

Stein: Where is Taft exactly?

Hitt: It's in the Bakersfield area. It's in Kern County. Taft is the big oilfield in Kern County, not very far from Bakersfield. I don't know how many miles, but I would say it was something like thirty to forty-five minutes' drive from Bakersfield. My father at that time worked for the Standard Oil Company on the oil lease there.

[Interruption]

Stein: So you were saying that your father worked for--

Hitt: Now how much family background do you want on my parents or anything? Because they do have an impact on my kind of working.

Stein: That's exactly what I was going to ask you about. Maybe we could just do that more systematically. Let's start with your father.

Hitt: All right. As I said, my father was a native-born Californian also. He was raised in Bakersfield. At the time when my father was four years old, his own father was killed in an accident. A few years

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 221.

Hitt: later, his mother married again and then when dad was about fourteen or fifteen years old, his stepfather passed away. By that time, my dad had two half-brothers and a half-sister. He had to be the sole means of support for the family, so he had to quit school and eventually went to work for the Standard Oil Company. Earlier he learned the machinist trade and worked in the Southern Pacific Railroad shop and worked in the oil fields for a few years, and then in Southern California. Eventually he was the inventor of some oil tools, a particular tool, and also oil well pumps, and was able to go into business for himself.

It's one of those cases of a self-made man who quit school at fourteen years old. He started his own business for himself in the mid-1920s, and in the very early '50s sold it to Armco Steel Company for several millions of dollars. But he was strictly a self-made man.

My mother was also raised in Bakersfield. Her father was a railroad locomotive engineer. She had two brothers and one sister. She was the oldest one in the family. She was a schoolteacher. She and my father had been childhood sweethearts from about the fourth grade on, and then she taught in a country school in Taft, where she had all eight grades in one room. She was just fresh out of what they called normal school then, which was about a two-year preparation for teachers. Most of the boys in her class were far bigger than she was. They had rough, tough oil field manners. But she managed to handle them some way.

Then when she and my father were married, she quit work. But she always was right at his side. They shared the business and they shared everything together. But when I said it had an impact on me, there was a very strong work ethic there, and a very strong commitment to ourselves and to other people. I have one sister, who is two years younger. We were a very, very close family. We didn't have much contact with the rest of the family, even our grandparents. The four of us were a very close family. My father, I said, was the epitome of the self-made man, but he made it himself, so he had a great sense of the value of a dollar.

My sister and I were raised to have that same sense. As a matter of fact, we were of considerable means in the Depression years, because the Depression never materially affected my father's income or his business, as it did everyone else. But I have to say in all honesty that my sister and I were well into high school and almost up into college before we really had an awareness that we had anything particularly more. We knew we lived in a bigger house, and we had things, but we were never conscious of having any more or being any different or privileged in any way.

Hitt: We were always raised to feel that, while we were not a deeply religious family per se--my mother was; the rest of us weren't--we were raised to believe that we had three major commitments: a commitment to the family, a commitment to other people, and a commitment to use our material means wisely, to the best advantage, for other people, too. I don't know of a better way to express it than that. My sister and I attended Sunday school very regularly but not because we wanted to. It was because mother insisted.

That's the reason that my sister and I both have spent our lives in volunteer activity, but not the do-gooder kind. We were fortunate that we did not have to earn a living. We didn't have to work. In those days, women generally didn't if they didn't have to. If I were coming out of college today, I would come out as a career woman. I would work. I would expect to have a career, want to have it. But not in those days; that was a long time ago. .

I graduated from the University of Southern California in 1939. I graduated as a teacher, and that primarily because I came up well into my junior year and realized that I had taken a whole lot of things that I was interested in--English and history and many things like that--but I was within slightly more than a year of graduating from SC [University of Southern California] without anything that I could ever put to any use in a job.

I suddenly thought, you know, while I never expected to work, that I best not spend four years in college and have no backup, if I ever did have a need for it, or circumstances warranted it. I turned to teaching because I was interested in it, interested in children, but primarily because in one year, by going to regular sessions and summer school and fudging a little on the university--taking night courses by quarters that overlapped, so that they never caught up with how many units I was carrying at any one time--I could and did get my teaching credential in one year. I simply had to take the teaching courses, do the practice teaching and psychology. I had my major and minor, but I did have to complete fifty-three or fifty-four units in that final year.

Stein: Good heavens!

Hitt: But as I said, I worked it out. The university would not have permitted me to do it had they known. But they didn't catch the overlap between the regular undergraduate campus study and the night school that ran by quarters in a different area of town.

Stein: To back up just a second to your parents again, do you know much about how your father's family came to California in the first place?

Hitt: Well, yes. They came in covered wagons, and homesteaded and settled. I'm a third-generation Californian. My dad was a second-generation Californian. His mother was born in Bakersfield, and her parents had come as bride and groom across the plains in covered wagons to homestead in Kern County. My mother's parents--Mother was raised in California--had come from Nebraska.

Stein: What had brought them to California, do you know?

Hitt: In my mother's case, it would have been my grandfather's engineering for the Southern Pacific Railroad. He was obviously transferred here as an engineer. In my father's case, I think it was the same thing that brought so many people out looking to settle in new land. Farmers, ranchers. It was just the come-to-California craze, I guess.

Stein: Had either of your parents had any religious training?

Hitt: Yes. Both were raised in religious families, my mother more than my father. My mother was, until the later years of her life, a very strong practicing Christian Scientist. My sister and I were raised--we went to the Christian Science Sunday school from the time we were old enough to go to Sunday school until we went away to college. So we were raised in it.

However, we both left, and in her later years, when she became very seriously ill, my mother left the Christian Science faith and became a very strong Methodist. She and my father went to the Methodist church, but this was after I was raised and gone, and they were very active in it. But we were raised in the Sunday school in the Christian Science church through that time.

In the case of both my sister and me, when we got to college and began to study science courses and many other things, we began to move away from it. We simply couldn't accept the conflicts that were there. The time that I really left it was as soon as I had my first child. He was very seriously ill; almost lost him from whooping cough. He had had no shots or anything. That was when I made the final break.

As a result, I would say that we were not a religious family except for my mother. My father never went to church when we were young. She did that, and we went to Sunday school on our own. It's only in the later years that he went with her, or became involved with it. While we were not--we didn't say grace, and we didn't do many of the things that you associate with it--we still had a very strong Christian Bible background and still do.

I have a very strong feeling of religion as ethics, but I have not since ever been able to quite find the right place on a permanent basis. We did join the Methodist church, but only for a period of

Hitt: a few years there. We--my husband and I--attended church regularly. We don't now, and yet we live it in our everyday lives, from a standpoint of ethics, not the exterior so much as the interior.

Stein: I noticed in one of your scrapbooks that there was a copy of an invocation that you had given at some meeting or another, and a letter that you wrote to your mother about that.

Hitt: Yes, it's very much there. It's very much a part of the way I look at life, the way I've raised my boys--I hope--to look at life, the things I say to my grandchildren. And yet it's not an external practicing thing at all. It's something that's strictly within me. I don't know how else to express it.

Stein: One of the other things that I'd like to check out is that you said that in the values that your parents raised you with, there were three things that were important. One of them was doing for other people, and being involved, and that you and your sister have always been involved in volunteer work, but not in the do-gooder variety. How would you define what sort of volunteer work you have been involved in? How would you define the do-gooder?

Hitt: I think of the do-gooder as the--and it may be a very different connotation than you or someone else would have, not of my generation. To me, the do-gooder is the wealthy social woman who makes much of scattering her grace around. It's a hard thing to express, but it's somebody who does things because it's the "in" thing to do, or because they belong to an "in" organization which is dedicated to that activity. They're not interested in the results. As long as people get done for, I'm not really sure that it makes very much difference how it's done or under what attitude, but that's never been mine.

Out attitude has always been to roll up our sleeves and go in and do it, instead of--now let me see. I'm trying to think of a good way to express it. For example, during tough times things were pretty tough even into the forties and fifties. We've always lived here in Southern California, where there was a large Mexican-American population. I've always been very close to that minority and very conscious of it and very, I think, understanding and sympathetic of it.

But rather than be the ones who would go around and ask the merchants for contributions for a picnic basket, we'd be the ones that would take it, for example, and maybe stay and play. We'd be the ones that would keep track of the people, and see them afterwards.

When I had Cub Scout troops, that was always a project. They always worked on refurbishing toys or something like that, generally for a Mexican-American family for something at Christmas. That was

Hitt: the way we earned most of our merit badges, by doing the things that Cub Scouts had to do for the badges, but instead of stringing beads or something else, they were making something for children. But never in a benevolent manner. I don't know how else to express it, except that I never did it from the attitude: here is the lady from on high descending to the level of the masses to scatter cheer around. Not that kind of stuff.

Stein: That sort of condescension.

Hitt: No, no.

Stein: Were your parents at all involved in civic activities?

Hitt: Yes, very much. My mother was very much involved; in her day, it was women's clubs and this kind of thing. The women's club in Whittier--Whittier was a small town, and that was one of the primary organizations in town that got involved in civic things, in scouts and Campfire Girls and things like that. My dad always did a lot. My dad served on the school board for many years. He served as a city councilman for a number of years. They were both involved in the Y [YMCA]. They made substantial financial contributions to the Y that enabled them to extend facilities. They built the Girl Scout house at one of the parks.

Dad was instrumental in--for example, there was an old, old cemetery in Whittier, the original cemetery. It was in what has now become through the years a more or less depressed area. It was low-income, not depressed in slums, but low-income with primarily older people on limited incomes, and a lot of them that were pretty much confined to home. This is fairly recent. Fifteen years or more ago, Dad conceived the idea of getting the city to turn the cemetery area into a park for those people, which would be adjacent to where they were so they could enjoy it, and he fought it through and went through the state [government] and everything else and got this.

If I would stop and think about it, or make lists, it would be innumerable the things they did for people, countless young people that they put through colleges and universities or professional schools and medical schools of their choice, and foreign exchange students, students from abroad. But always very quietly. Most of it was done anonymously.

Stein: Was this going on while you were growing up?

Hitt: Yes, to some extent, but not as much. Their first obligation was to be sure that they got my sister and me through school, and took care of that. You know, while we had very substantial means, we were always aware of the fact that it could be wiped out tomorrow. Most of what they did by way of other students through college and so on were after we were through.

Stein: I was wondering about their civic involvement, more generally.

Hitt: Oh, all the time we were growing up, they were very active in the things that most parents were in those days: PTA, the civic groups. It was a small town. Things were so different than they are now.

My dad's manufacturing plant was located in Santa Fe Springs, which was the heart of what we would now call the barrio. In those days, it was just a Mexican-American area where most of them lived. It was a very, very low-income, very poor group. For some twenty, twenty-five years, Dad worked out an arrangement with the school where he could pick up the tab for milk for all those children in the middle of the morning, and extra food for those that the teachers thought had come to school hungry in the morning.

Then every Christmas, they always opened up the plant and one of the employees dressed up like Santa Claus and they had candy and gifts for the children. They came through by grades and all the rest of their families came; there would be hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them.

That really was, I would say, almost bigger than Christmas for us on our own. But it was an area where they just wouldn't have had anything else. But it was never, again, done with a sense of benevolence. It was kind of a family thing. We were all there, all the employees were there and all the employees' kids were there. We all went through the line and got a toy or candy, so that we never made the other children feel that they were any different. It was for everybody, those that needed it and those that didn't, so there was no demarcation at all.

Stein: It sounds, then, that that influence was really strong, right from the beginning.

Hitt: Yes, it was. I know there were innumerable times when the principal of the Los Nietos School, a woman, called on dad and mother for help. They became very close friends. There were many, many, many times through the years that they needed something at that school, and the district funds weren't there, or there'd be a family that needed something, eyeglasses or dental work or surgery. She called Dad on the phone and he'd say, "Sure, do it, and send me the bill."

As I said, I don't think anybody ever knew it but the family and the principal. The children never knew where it came from. It was just taken care of. As far as they knew, some doctor was doing it for them.

Stein: What was the name of the school?

Hitt: Los Nietos. [Spells it] It was a kindergarten through eighth grade school.

Stein: And that was in Whittier?

Hitt: In Los Nietos, which we would now call a suburb of Whittier. It's an incorporated city. I think it is now. It's in the Santa Fe Springs area, in the oil fields area.

Education and Goals

Family Goals and Guidelines

Stein: In the sense of translating these values into your own lives, what sort of expectations did your parents have for you and your sister, in terms of what sort of life they wanted you to lead? Obviously they wanted you to go to college.

Hitt: They wanted us to get married. They wanted us to have children. My father wanted me to be a lawyer, as I remember. There were just two girls, no sons, and I've often laughed and said that I think that my father thought I was a boy until I was about twelve or thirteen years old, because I did boy-kind of things, baseball, and we were close companions. But I think that given that generation, they never expected us to work unless we wanted to. I think Dad would have loved it if I had decided to study law. He always felt that I would be a good attorney, because I was such a great arguer, as he used to put it, and a strong advocate. But when I wasn't interested in going to law school, that was perfectly all right.

I remember well I had always had very high grades in high school, and yet had a lot of fun. A very normal life, but grades came easy to me. Plus the fact that--part again I think of the background and the age--I just wouldn't have settled for anything less. They came easy for me, but I would have died rather than say, "I'm not prepared" when called on in class. It was a thing you just didn't do! You just didn't miss school. It would never have occurred to me to do any less than the best that I could do, but I had an awful lot of fun and a great deal of social life with it.

When I went to college, I can remember Dad saying to me, "Okay now, Pat. This is a whole new ball game. It's going to be different. You got almost all A's--a few B's scattered in there--in high school. But don't think you're going to go to college and do the same thing. I don't want you to, because you won't have any fun." He said, "I don't want you to go up there and work that hard. I want you to have a full experience."

Hitt: He said, "You better never flunk out! Don't go that far, but I don't expect you to go up there and get very high grades. I want you to have the full thing." Well, I didn't flunk out, but I didn't graduate any cum laude in any form or anything else. [Laughter] But I had a full life and a wonderful time, and a rounded balance.

Sure, Dad would have been tickled to death if I had been an attorney. It never occurred to him to think of either one of us in terms of going into his business or understudying that as a boy would have, because at that time it was a field that would be totally foreign to women. You know, the oil fields, oil well pumps, machine shops, this kind of thing. So that never entered his mind.

I think really basically what they wanted us to do was to live what they considered to be a good life, honest and decent life, to be happy, to have children, to raise them, to have a high sense of values. They weren't goal-setters, you know. It was never discussed. In those days, there really wasn't all this much emphasis on setting goals. You just did something, and it wasn't for a reason and you weren't setting goals. You know, it's a hard thing to express, and particularly with women.

Stein: The business of life goals is really a very recent development for women.

Hitt: Yes. The Golden Rule was much more important, truly. Men, women, or anyone, the thesis of the Golden Rule was more important than setting goals.

Stein: Did your father have similar ideas for your sister about being a lawyer or anything else?

Hitt: No, it was a totally different thing, because my sister wasn't a very good student. It didn't come easy for her, she didn't apply herself, she was just not a good student, so they just hoped and prayed she'd get through high school and get into college, maybe get into a college to have that experience, but the thought of her ever doing anything professionally would be remote from everybody's mind.

Stein: That's something I forgot to check out about your parents. Your father obviously didn't have any college.

Hitt: Mother had two years of normal school after graduation from high school, which was required for a teacher.

Stein: And that was all that either one of them had had.

Mrs. Robert J. Hitt
730 Temple Place
Laguna Beach, Calif. 92651

March 21, 1978

Dear Minnie,

As I read through this and think about my life I realize more and more what a very major influence my mother and father were. Other people, individually or collectively, exerted only minimal influence as compared to them. In this vein, I also realize that for some reason my father dominates the script to the detriment of my mother's role in my life. Perhaps this is put in better focus in the second taping session. I don't remember whether or not we dealt with that subject in the second session. In case we didn't, I will here.

My father is in many ways typically Irish - warm, sentimental, ebullient, loud-some, dynamic, forceful and hard driving. Second best is unacceptable in himself or anyone else and he has never been known for his tolerance of weakness in himself or others, nor is he always tactful in dealing with people. Many of these qualities are in my makeup also.

My mother was also a very forceful person but in a quieter, more low-key manner. She could and did stand up to my father whenever she disagreed with him (I'm sure she won far more arguments than she lost). She was a beautiful, gracious, generous, warm woman. She had unflinching tact and sensitivity in her relations with other people. She was a devoted mother to my sister and me and the constant companion,

confidant, adviser and partner to my father. This was a life long love affair such as are seldom seen today. Mother was the balance, the equilibrium, the quiet decision maker, the calm and pacifying influence in a volatile family. But with all this, she was very independant, never allowed herself to be pushed around and possessed a will of iron when convinced she was right.

Looking at myself objectively, I think I'm about half mother and half dad -

Hope all this helps clarify what makes me tick -

Affectionately,
Pat

Hitt: Or ever had. Now both of them were avid readers, and more non-fiction than fiction. I rarely remember seeing either my mother or father with fiction; they read mostly non-fiction. So that while I say that they had no further schooling in a formal sort of a way, they certainly had it through books. They were constant readers, always reading about things, almost always non-fiction. A great variety of interests, and a great deal of knowledge. They had probably as much knowledge as most college graduates, but they got it in a different way, because they had a natural curiosity and wanted to know about anything and everything, and were interested.

Stein: Did they encourage you and your sister to read?

Hitt: I don't know if they ever encouraged. We just did. I just loved to read and always did, but I don't know if it was ever encouraged. The books were there, available. I wasn't aware of any encouragement. I suppose that the fact that we saw them reading--remember, in those days you didn't have television. There wasn't that distraction. We had pretty strict rules about study time and radio listening time. We weren't permitted to listen to radio programs after dinner at night. If we wanted to listen to them, we could come in out of the yard or get home from school or whatever activities and do it before dinner. We had a six o'clock dinner, and once dinner was over, that was it. We studied or we read or we did something together as a family. So there wasn't the distraction that there is now. It was a more disciplined life.

Stein: TV has certainly revolutionized peoples' lifestyles.

Hitt: Yes, I saw it. For all that I was aware of it and did everything I could to stop it, it had an effect on my own kids that I wish it hadn't. None of my boys are readers much, and I know that the reason they aren't is because there was that darn television. Though they weren't allowed to watch it after dinner, if they were at somebody else's house they did. When they got older, they had studying. There wasn't much television--actually, my boys were well into elementary school before television came in, before we even had a set or anyone else did. But they did not read, and they still to this day aren't readers like my husband and I are, or like we were. I'm sure that they very rarely sit down with a book at night. That's what it's all about.

Stein: Yes.

Hitt: Of course, each generation to its own. Fortunately, I'm delighted to see that my grandchildren aren't going to be like that. The oldest one is six and the youngest one is a year and a half old, and they are mad about books! I hope it lasts. I've got a stack of them in here. They come, and they love to be read to. They're crazy about it, even the littlest one, and they have been from the very beginning.



Patricia Reilly [Hitt]
at 3 or 4 years of age.



Patricia Reilly [Hitt], center,
with friends, in early entrepreneurial
venture, c. 1930.



Patricia Reilly [Hitt], front row,
first on right, poses with Delta
Gamma Sorority sisters, 1935.

Hitt: I hope it lasts. Mine were too, when they were little. I read to them every single night of the world until they were well into school. [Telephone interruption] But it got lost somewhere.

##

Hitt: Now where were we?

Stein: We were talking about reading and television.

Hitt: Well, I think I pretty much covered that subject.

Whittier High School and the University of Southern California

Stein: That gets us back to your own education. You mentioned you went to Whittier High School.

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: Were there any particular subjects that you excelled in there?

Hitt: As I look back on it, I think the B's I got were in math and science, so obviously and to this day, in math I just never went any further with than I had to. Science, at SC or at high school, I took only, for example, what I had to have in order to graduate. My interests were history, English literature more than English. For some reason or another, English grammar always came easy for me. The one thing I regret, and one of the things I knew at the time that I would, but I had a difficult time with a foreign language. I kind of think that I went to high school in the old days where everybody thought you had to have Latin, that Latin was the basis of all languages, that it was an absolute essential.

As a result, to complete my language requirements in high school I took three years of Latin. It may have helped my English grammar. I don't know whether it did. I never had a problem. Somehow I just always knew it. Grammar just was never a problem. It may have helped it, but it sure did raise Cain with my later attempts to pick up a foreign language, because then when I went to SC, I struggled through two years of Spanish, off and on. I really had a perfectly terrible time with it, because invariably--up would crop a Latin conjugation on a Spanish verb. [Laughter]

Off and on through the years, I'll go on intensive tutoring sessions with Spanish. I simply just don't have the facility for that second language. I'm sure it wasn't all Latin, but I regret--If I had it to do over again, if I had taken three years of Spanish

Hitt: in high school, I'd have been well on my way. I think I would have developed it. Then I'd have been all right. But primarily it was English literature and history. Remember too, in those days high school curriculums were much more limited than they are now. Civics I enjoyed. I took civics and government, but it was a required one-year course, half a year on civics and the other half on government. Of course, the government came in the history too. But I didn't show any particular interest or aptitude at that point for them.

Stein: Were there any teachers who were particularly influential?

Hitt: Yes. Of course I think a teacher can be the most influential person in an individual's life, without any exception, if you get some good ones. I had some good ones. I had some that were terrible. Most of them were good teachers, but I don't remember all their names. I did have, through the years, one in the fourth grade that I remember vividly as not good. [Laughter] I did have teachers, teachers and non-academics, through the high school years, that did have a great effect on me.

Stein: Who were some of them? Do you remember?

Hitt: One of them was a young teacher. She came to Whittier High School from UCLA in my senior year. I never took a course from her, but because she was young and very, very attractive, she was the one that took over the extracurricular activities with students. Her name was Mrs. Dorothy Brown. She had an enormous influence; we became very good friends. We exchange Christmas cards. I see her. We've kept track of each other ever since. We became very good friends, and I think she was a great influence on me. She didn't get me to go to UCLA instead of SC, but she did have an influence. I had other teachers in history and other subjects that I remember and that did have considerable influence on me, I know.

Stein: Who were some of the others?

Hitt: Well, I remember a junior high school teacher by the name of Charlotte Carbert. This is all so far back that I can't remember why she did particularly [influenced me]. Then there was another teacher who was a Spanish teacher, a Mrs. Holt, whom I never had in class, but I had her in other things, and she had a decided influence, yet I can't tell you why or necessarily pinpoint it. It's just that I remember them. There are probably others if I can think about it, you know. I might be able to be more specific, but I haven't even thought about this in years.

Of course, at SC there were teachers that had enormous influence. While I had always loved literature, studied English literature, Frank Baxter gave me a whole new feeling about it, a whole new outlook

Hitt: on it. I had teachers that affected me adversely, one especially, but I guess I managed to overcome it. The only course I ever flunked in my whole life was one semester of speech at SC, and I ended up spending the rest of my life doing public speaking. [Laughter]

Stein: That's an unlikely course for you to flunk.

Hitt: The first semester I had one teacher, and I got along just beautifully. The next semester, I got a man and there was such a clash there. He was a bully. He terrified me so that I would work hours getting a speech ready, and when he'd call out my name in this booming, thundering voice in the middle of the class, I would say, "I'm not prepared," which wasn't true at all. I simply could not get up out of my chair and get up in front and give it, because I felt he was laughing at me, and would have been. And he'd do it! He did it, and I flunked the course. He knew exactly what he was doing. I thought so at the time, I know now in retrospect. He was Allan Nichols, and he was kind of a bully.

Stein: Well, I was going to ask if you felt that your problems with him came from your being a woman?

Hitt: I know what it was. It came from being what was then a very attractive, very active, very popular--I was a freshman class queen. I think it was that the idea of bending me to his will, even if it was just in the classroom, had considerable appeal. I was the only one. This wasn't true of all women, at least in that class. It may have been in others. We never crossed words. I was much too--I wasn't timid. I don't know what the word is. Intimidated, I think, by teachers and professors. A girl out of a small town suddenly in the big city university. Yes, there's no doubt but what I was singled out for special treatment for the fact that I was a woman was part of it. He wouldn't have done that to one of the men in the class. There were a lot of big varsity ball players in that class. [Laughter] No way!

Stein: Were there many other women in the class?

Hitt: Oh, I suppose. It wasn't fifty-fifty. There were some. It was because, as I've said, there were many varsity ball players in that class. That was one of the classes that was considered kind of a cinch course for the athletes. They didn't have any problems. But I don't remember anyone else in the class having quite the same problem I did. Now maybe other girls who were in that class, if I could even remember who, and knew where they were today, and asked them, experienced the same thing. But I don't think so. And if they did, they didn't react like I did. I think I was the only one that failed that class. I'm sure I probably was the only F that was received in that class. But I would wager that virtually all of the A's and B's went to the males, too. I was the only one who had the distinction, I'm sure, of getting an F.

Stein: Did you repeat it? Did you make up the F?

Hitt: No, because it wasn't a required course. I didn't care by that time. I was so infuriated by the whole thing that I thought, "Oh, to heck with it. Who's going to use public speaking?" [Laughter]

Stein: Famous last words!

Hitt: I think that the fact that I was in leadership roles in high school and in college helped to take the place of a formal speech education, because I was at ease. I was at ease on a platform and I was at ease expressing myself, articulating what I wanted or what I wanted to get across.

Stein: What sort of activities were you involved in in high school and college?

Hitt: Girls' athletics, the honor society, the pep club in high school. I don't know what it would be in a city high school, but it would be those students who were responsible for rallies and auditorium kind of things. In college, of course, I was involved in a sorority. Not in service organizations, however. I would have been, but my grades just weren't good enough. I had the bent, but Mortar Board and the Amazons--those honorary service organizations required a grade average of B or better, and I didn't have it.

Stein: This was in college?

Hitt: In college. I was in little theater in high school. I was in the little theater productions. Most everything that there was in after school activities, I did, athletics particularly.

Stein: Which one?

Hitt: All of them. Whatever was in season in high school. By the time I got to college, I didn't do much in athletics other than PE [physical education]. I took golf but I didn't get into it. There wasn't that much time. I was doing other things. Also in those days, most of the girls that were active in college athletics were the PE types. We just didn't have all that much in common. It was a different kind. There were PE majors who were going to go on and teach physical education and go into something like that.

Unless they happened to be sorority sisters who were doing things socially together, we didn't-- I'd been very active and I played golf and did a lot of other things, but not in an organized way.

Stein: You mentioned that you were freshman class queen in college?

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: How did that come about?

Hitt: I think the freshman class queen was elected by the two major male honorary societies at SC. I don't remember that it was a general class balloting. There were only two, and it was at homecoming time. There was a freshman class queen and a sophomore class queen. Then one of the big homecoming events was the contest between the freshman and sophomore classes, the men on the field pulling on a rope or something like that. Whether the freshmen won or the sophomores won, that was a big deal.

I know it wasn't a ballot. It must have been by the men's honorary societies, not the fraternities, you see, because this occurred less than three months after I first hit the campus.

Stein: Goodness!

Hitt: So it was one of those things. It wasn't anything you worked for.

Stein: But you must have been involved in something to have become known in just three months.

Hitt: I suppose, but I don't really remember what. Remember, it wasn't that big a school. SC wasn't that big a school in those days, and in those days, the fraternities and sororities were very influential. The non-organization people were just there as students. They weren't really involved much in activities or anything else. Almost all the activities were dominated by the fraternities and sororities, and more the fraternities than the sororities. Most of the members of the honorary societies would have come out of fraternities, because they were the ones that encouraged their members. Most of the non-organization people were there just to get an education. They didn't participate much in campus life. Most of them didn't. A high percentage.

I suppose that all you had to do was be along Fraternity Row. That's about as much attention as you had to attract.

Stein: How did you decide to go to USC? You mentioned that one teacher in high school had tried to get you to go to UCLA.

Hitt: Well, if I made a conscious decision to go to SC, it was when I was very young. It was always taken for granted. My dad was a great SC football fan, and he had season tickets and they always had the games on the radio. At some point in my life, I guess, it just became a fait accompli, and it never entered my head to go anywhere else. I did, halfway through SC, about mid-term there, think about possibly transferring to Stanford. I really don't know why, if you

Hitt: want to know the truth. I can't remember there was any particular reason or why for it, but I went up and kind of looked it over and spent a week or a long weekend in a sorority house over there. I really got turned off. I wondered why in the world I ever thought I wanted to or anything else. I was tickled to death to get back. I really don't know why I thought about transferring, because I loved SC. I was crazy about it.

I would say that it might have come because I thought I wanted to get further away from home, even though I lived on campus from the time I started there. I lived in the Delta Gamma sorority house because I pledged as soon as I got there. At those times you didn't have to live in the dorm any period of time. I moved right in, so that for all intents and purposes, I was only home on occasional weekends; my mother said when I ran out of clean clothes. But I think maybe it was the lure of San Francisco or the lure of Northern California. It didn't last long.

Stein: My notes also say that you were vice-president of the student body in college. Is that right?

Hitt: Yes, in my senior year. That was an elective office, ballot-elected. I ran for it and was elected.

Stein: How did you get nominated for that?

Hitt: [Laughs] I don't suppose someone nominated me; I'm not really sure. I don't think it was a formal nomination. I think you circulated a petition, somebody circulated a petition, and if you got enough signatures, you went on the ballot. I think that's the way it happened.

Stein: And you said earlier you didn't do anything in that position?

Hitt: Well, not really. I sat on a few boards, but it really wasn't all that earth-shattering. [Laughter] The student body president was a big job, but this [vice-president] really wasn't a big student job. It was more of an honorary thing than anything else. A few extra pictures in the annual, a few more activities, but no real substance to it.

Stein: What were you majoring in there? In education?

Hitt: No, up until the last year I was a history major with an English minor, and then that last year I had to take all education courses. I graduated with a bachelor of science in education with a history major and an English minor.

Stein: I see. I was a little bit confused there. The "Who's Who" entry for you appeared to say that you had both a B.S. and a B.A.

- Hitt: I did, but that was the system at that time. The B.A. I received, and it was all concurrent. Actually my degree was a B.S. and B.A. in those days, because I had a bachelor of arts with a history major and an English minor, but I also was a credentialled teacher with that specialty, so that was a bachelor of science. I received the two degrees simultaneously. That was the system then.
- Stein: Well, that explains that confusion. And that was in 1939 that you graduated?
- Hitt: Yes.
- Stein: I just have a couple more little questions here before we go into what happened after you left college. First of all, you said that you grew up in Whittier. Of course, Whittier produced other famous residents as well.
- Hitt: Well, the fact that I grew up in Whittier is how I got into politics in the first place, indirectly. The fact that I grew up in Whittier, that I knew the Nixon family--I didn't know him [Richard Nixon]. Pat [Ryan Nixon] came to Whittier High School the year after I was gone, so I didn't know her when she was a teacher. He was five years ahead of me in school, so we were never in the same school, and we were not in the same school system. But we knew the family, knew of them, knew the market. I knew him by reputation because he was a champion debater at Whittier College when I was at Whittier High School. You know, we kind of looked up to those things. My father was very active in getting him to run for Congress the first time. That's how I got into politics.
- Stein: I noticed that several of the clippings said that you and your family were frequent visitors to the Nixon grocery store. I didn't know if that was just press--
- Hitt: That's an interpretation. We knew where the grocery store was. We rarely went there because we could drive a mile to the grocery store in Whittier and you had to drive six miles to get to the grocery store in East Whittier. So we didn't patronize them, no, but we knew of it. We knew the family. As I said, anything my dad got into, the whole blame family got into. He got everybody into it. That was how I happened to get into that first campaign in '46, because Dad was in it and he was interested, so the whole family got their marching orders. We all did something in it.

From then on, politics just sort of grabbed me. As my life went on, it became a more and more dominant part as the necessity for me to do things concerned with my kids--we'll probably get to that later; I'm jumping 'way ahead.

Marriage, Family, and Civic Affairs

Stein: What I figured that I'd do in structuring this whole thing is that because politics and the Republican party and your work in campaigns was so important, what I'd do is abandon chronology at the beginning and ask you now about your non-political civic activities and your Federation of Republican Women activities, and after we get those out of the way we can concentrate on the campaigns and go through them, one by one. What did you do right after you left the university? You got married?

Hitt: The first time.

Stein: Was that someone from the university?

Hitt: Yes. Someone I'd gone with the last year or so of school. We were married. I didn't work. I never used that credential, the teaching credential, in all my life. I just didn't. Then we had two sons. I was strictly a housewife, except that I did help--I was active in the Delta Gamma Junior Alumni, which I helped to organize, the young group as you came out of SC. We didn't have all that much interest in the older one. We wanted our own younger group. I did set that up, and I was active in it for a while. I was active in the junior Town and Gown, and helped to get that started, the Town and Gown Juniors at USC, which was a new junior division of the Town and Gown organization, which was the earliest and the first of the women's support groups at SC.

But really, those two were about it. I was busy learning to be a housewife. I had never cooked anything in my whole life except chocolate fudge and soft-boiled eggs before I was married. But I did know how to do things. I watched, and I knew how to keep house. Even though we had full-time housekeepers at home, my sister and I were required to keep up our own rooms and do our own things. Mother thought that even if we didn't have to do it, we needed to know how.

That was basically right out of school, living on a very modest income. The price of the college graduates--I think they started out pretty low in business. Then we had two sons. I began to get really active when they got into school. Other than the two involvements with USC as alumna, which was not a big time-consuming thing, my first real involvement was PTA. The minute the oldest of the boys got to school age, then I thought, "Okay, then that's up to me. That's what I do," and got into that.

Stein: Now when were the boys born?

Hitt: The oldest one was born the thirty-first of December, 1941. The second son was born in '46. May 6, '46. Let's see, Johnny was born the last day of '41. He was in school about 1946 or '47. That's when the PTA thing began.

Hitt: The first campaign I did was in '46, but that had nothing to do with it. I mean, that was something I did because Dad asked me to. All I did was, I took one block and rang doorbells with the youngest one in a stroller with me, right in my own neighborhood. But I did get very deeply and actively involved in PTA.

Stein: Where was this that you were living at this point?

Hitt: In San Marino. That Congressional district was in Alhambra, so all I had to do was walk a few blocks to be in it and do that. That was in '46. I'm trying to think when the PTA started. It would have started when the older son was about six, about 1948; it's just for organizational work, organizing. Not belonging to, necessarily, but starting groups. Having started two organizations, both of which still exist today and going strong, I realized that that really was-- I did have a forte there.

In later years, I found out that it was also administration. They are my strong areas. But organization was the one that--they're very similar--developed first, so that almost concurrently with joining the PTA, I was running a part of it, or responsible for serving in an office. Ways and means more often than not, because that was doing something that took some organizing rather than reading the minutes. I never was a secretary that I can remember. I've virtually never been a secretary for anything. I never have been a treasurer of any organization. I wouldn't take it. I'm terrible with figures, and I don't like it. I loathe it!

So I usually, as I look back, in most of the experiences of my life, I've either been president or ways and means chairman, because they were active organizing kind of things. Then when the oldest boy got Cub Scout age, I was Cub Scout den mother, and did that for four years because no other mother in the den would take it. So I kept doing it over and over.

Then of course, what you've done for one you've got to do for the second one. Along came the second one, just as I'd finished the first one, and I had four more years. I was a Cub Scout den mother for eight consecutive years which I've always said was the greatest star in my crown. [Laughter] But I loved kids, and I was easy with them, and I liked it. I could get out and play baseball with the boys or whatever, so that it was not a difficult thing for me. By that time, I had divorced my first husband. We were married seven years. Bob and I--Bob Hitt--were married. He was active in Cub Scouts. I was a den mother and he'd end up being a pack leader or running softball, Little League ball clubs.

We opted to raise the boys in a small-town atmosphere. At the time that they were young, and that the oldest one was in primary school, first, second or third grade, we lived on Balboa Island.

Hitt: Johnny's first three or four years of school were at Corona Del Mar School. Then when Rick came along, when he was ready for kindergarten, we decided that we really wanted to raise those boys in the country in a small town, small town atmosphere.

By that time, the beach was getting to be a little rugged for raising children. The whole Newport Beach area--the beach scene was beginning to have problems. This was the early years of minor youth delinquency. It was getting to be not what we really thought we wanted, with the problems and many other things, so that we moved to Villa Park, which is inland about sixteen, seventeen miles, in the vicinity of Orange. We lived there until the boys were through high school. One was married and the other one was in college.

We opted--as I said, for a small school. They could have 4-H, they could have horses. We had five acres. They had horses, they could have all of that thing.

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Hitt: You see, at that point in our lives, we were living in a rural area outside a small town. We loved it! The boys loved it. To this day, though they both live in Corona Del Mar and live in a vastly different setting, their children will go to school in a vastly different kind of situation and be raised in it, they wouldn't take anything for those years, because it was kind of a rural life. It was close.

We knew the parents of all of our boys' friends. We knew where they were all the time. Of course, they were usually at our house, and all of their friends. I always maintained that I would rather have a mob of kids at my house and know where they were. But we really, truly were fortunate in that we were--my boys were--ahead of the drug scene, thank heavens! They came after the heavy drinking. The alcohol, the heavy drinking was in my time. Then there was a lull. Now it's back to that. But they were ahead, really ahead of the drug scene, and ahead of the motorcycle crews and just a lot of those things, so that it was not that difficult to raise them. We were also living in a very different kind of an atmosphere. They were 4-Hers. They played Little League ball. We all did all those things as a family.

We had a mountain cabin. Sometimes there'd be thirty-five of us up there, with kids all over the place and sleeping bags outside [laughter]. All of our friends went. There was one group of four families of us that had hamburgers together every single Sunday night at somebody's house. A lot of our and the kids' social life evolved to some extent around the school, because most of their friends went there. We were always putting on enchilada suppers or something to raise money.

Hitt: The school didn't have PTA as such. It had the old parent-teacher organization kind of thing. It was a country school, and practically everything was needed except the basic essentials. We had to get together and figure out how to have a carnival or have something to raise the money to buy the extras, if it was new football uniforms or equipment or whatever.

There was a period of time there when our lives did evolve considerably around the neighborhood and the school. There was a great overlapping with Orange, the town of Orange. Some of our friends lived there. Then I became involved in the Assistance League in Orange.

Stein: I wanted to ask you about that. What is it?

Hitt: Well, how do I describe it? It's not Junior League. It's a different concept from Junior League. It's a women's service organization. There are quite a few of them here. You're required to put in time. There's no age limit. It doesn't carry with it the social status, shall we say, of Junior League, nor does it have the status responsibilities, if you know what I mean. It is by invitation, yes, but it's not that exclusive. It's deeply involved in community activities, community welfare and social activities. It's social as well, except that you have to work like the dickens.

I got involved in that, and I was involved both on a national level and in my local chapter for a number of years, which was another service kind of thing.

Then I did just like everybody else did, you know: the March of Dimes, the Red Cross, all of those fund-raiding drives. I was almost always the one that carried the envelope around and knocked on doors. And Scouting and PTA--all of those kinds of things were dominant in the years when the boys were growing up. The campaigning and the political activity were secondary in those years. The things that involved the children, the boys' activities or the civic things, came first.

However, they all realized that when a campaign came up, there was going to be a period of two or three months there where I would give a little less time to these other things, because I had just so much time to give. But it was not until--and I've laughed and said oftentimes, and it is the truth--it was not until my youngest son came home from high school one day and asked me, (God bless him, he didn't want to hurt my feelings, you know, so afraid that he would hurt my feelings or something) and very seriously said, "Mother, do you really think you need to be around school so much?"

Hitt: It was then that I knew that my PTA days were over. I don't mean it like it had been a bore. I had enjoyed it, but I was glad to get out of it too. I knew that that was my signal. The oldest boy was in college by then, but I knew that that was my signal that the youngest boy no longer needed the support of our deep involvement in his school activities. He was ready to fly on his own.

When that happened, then I got more and more involved in the political things. I kept up the Assistance League, because that was a community thing and it was our friends, our social friends. We were all involved together, women. So it was a service thing, but yet our social lives were involved in it very much too.

Stein: Let me, just for the record here, get your sons' names. The oldest one is John?

Hitt: The oldest one is John. They're both Hamilton, by the first marriage. Both boys are by my first marriage. The oldest one is John Hamilton and the youngest one is Patrick Hamilton, whom I more often will call Rick. When he was little we called him Ricky. Now we try hard to say Rick. He's grown and has his own child. That nickname came about because we didn't want two Pats. I wasn't about to have a boy be called "Little Pat" or "Young Pat" or some other Pat to differentiate from me, so we took the R-i-c-k off the end of the word and called him by that name.

Stein: One thing I came across in your clippings which I'm just reminded of now in my notes here, is that at some point or another you owned and operated a nursery school in Laguna Beach.

Hitt: I did.

Stein: Was that much later?

Hitt: No, that was earlier. We missed that. At the time that the boys' father and I were divorced, we lived in San Marino. I wanted to make a complete break. I also wanted to be on my own. So I decided that the one and only thing that I could think of that I was qualified to do would be something in the way of teaching or education. On the other hand, the boys were young. We separated when I was pregnant with the second boy, and we were divorced formally--I had my interlocutory decree when he was six weeks old.

I had to find something that I could do that would return me a little revenue and also take up my time and interests and be a challenge, but still be able to be home with those two boys, as young as they were. There had been a woman who had been a babysitter for me for years. She was a much older woman, free. So at the time I talked to her, I said, "Marie, I'm thinking about buying a place

Hitt: down around Laguna Beach or some place." I had looked into it. There were no nursery schools down here. I thought that would be a pretty good, safe place for it.

I happened that it ended up in South Laguna because property was much less expensive there then. I had to have a pretty big house with a big yard to run that kind of an operation. I said, "If I do this, will you go with me and live with me and help me? You kind of take over with Rick in the daytime there at home, for room and board and a small salary." She agreed, so I did. I did sell the house in San Marino, bought a house in South Laguna, and opened up a nursery school. I took, oh, from eight to twenty children all day long at a dollar a day, if you can believe it. [Laughter] That was the going rate then. You gave them lunch and many other things.

My greatest problem was that the footloose and fancy-free mothers would just not pick them up when they were supposed to. Many times I had to give children their dinner and put them to bed because what are you going to do? You can't turn them out. That would happen to me two or three times, then I might refuse to take the child any more.

While it was an educational kind of thing, it was regarded more as a babysitter, a cheap babysitter by some. I did that for about a year and a half, and then Bob and I were married. At that point I sold the house in South Laguna and we moved to Balboa Island. We got a place that had a little apartment above the garage, and Marie Eckert went with us. She did babysitting for us and other things.

That came from simply a search for something that I was qualified to do, had some background in, and could be at home with the children, because I didn't want to leave them all day long and go out and work. I don't know, maybe teaching would have been it, but I wanted to be home with them. It was a short time thing. I would not say that it was enormously financially successful. I never even broke even on it, really.

Stein: I was going to ask if you were able to.

Hitt: No, I didn't, but it was many other things that were much better than that. No, there was no way that it could be. But it did give me the opportunity to be home with the children, right there all the time. It gave me something to do. It gave me an interest and it gave me a challenge and a total change.

It wasn't until after that I became involved in PTA or Assistance League or political campaigns other than walking a block in a couple of elections. I ran the school for half of '46 and all of '47. It was prior to my getting involved in much of anything else.

Stein: I see. And then you met Bob Hitt?

Hitt: We had known each other in college. My first husband and Bob were fraternity brothers. As a matter of fact, Bob had been head usher at Frank's and my wedding, so we had known each other for a long time. He was overseas in World War II. When he came back home my marriage had broken up, and we started going out.

All of the involvements--city, community, everything that we've spoken of, with the exception of doing the precinct work in the '46 campaign--came after he and I were married and after the nursery school. At that time [of the nursery school] I wasn't doing anything else. It was a six-day-a week thing.

Stein: Six days a week?

Hitt: Oh, yes. [Laughter]

Stein: Good heavens!

Hitt: Well, there are mothers who don't want to have to watch out for kids on Saturdays either. [Laughter] It was the kind of a thing, well, if that's what was needed, why, that's what I did.

Stein: Did you have a name for your little enterprise?

Hitt: You know, I haven't thought about it since, in all these years. I can't even remember what. What did I call it? Because I didn't do any advertising. We didn't use it very much. It was a word of mouth kind of thing. I can remember debating over Punch and Judy and a lot of kind of corny, trite things, and ended up with something that was probably pretty corny and pretty trite. [Laughter]

II REPUBLICAN ORGANIZATIONS

Federation of Republican Women

County and State Activities

Stein: Let's skip the '46 campaign for a second and jump ahead a few years to when you became involved with the Federation of Republican Women.

Hitt: That was in '52. In 1952, we were then living in Villa Park. That was the first Eisenhower-Nixon campaign. Here was Richard Nixon, candidate for vice-president, along with Dwight Eisenhower. By that time, I'd had a little sampling of campaign work, and knew I liked it. I knew I liked the challenge. I liked everything about it. At that time we had just moved to Villa Park; as a matter of fact, hadn't been there more than two or three months.

I asked somebody who was the primary Republican political leader in Orange, and I was told that it was Gordon Richmond. We've later become very, very good--oh, longtime friends. He was an attorney there in Orange. As I've said, many of the things I did I look back on now and think how astounding they were to the other person, but I didn't think anything about it at the time. I didn't know I was doing anything any different. I can look back now and think that it must have been astounding if somebody would have the doorbell ring, and open the door and here's a young mother with a child--one in a baby buggy and one in a stroller--saying, "I'd like to talk to you about my candidate."

In those days, the impact must have been incredible, but I didn't think about it. I just figured everybody else was doing the same thing. I mean, that was the way I could do it, so I figured that would do for everybody else. There weren't really that many young people involved, but I didn't know it.

Hitt: Anyway, I walked in, just walked in off the street into Gordon's office one day and asked to see him. Fortunately, he wasn't busy, he was there. I went in and introduced myself and I said, "I want to work for Nixon and Eisenhower, and I understand you're the primary Republican in this town, and I want to do something for them." He said, "Fine. What would you like to do?" I said, "Well, I can give you a half day every day. You can get a half a day, five days a week. What do you want me to do?"

Well, of course, here again this was an unbelievable thing!

Stein: He probably fell out of his chair.

Hitt: Yes. Somebody walks in and says, "I want to work, and I'll give you that much time." So he said, "Great! We can sure use it. We're getting ready to open a headquarters here in Orange. Have you ever done any headquarters work?" I said, "No, but I can learn, if somebody will tell me." We got to talking. Well, dear loving God, I opened it and ran it and worked out a schedule so that whoever came in to relieve me in the afternoon knew exactly what I worked out. Logbooks--I really had the thing organized to the teeth.

That was my first involvement in Orange County in politics. The election was in November. In this process, I met Gordon Richmond's counterpart, the woman leader, who in those days was Mrs. Republican of Orange County, a woman by the name of Lelia Baeskins. For many years Lelia had been the number one mover and shaker both in front and behind the scenes. She lived in Orange. I met Lelia and there was a great affinity between the two of us. I learned so much from her in many, many ways.

But anyway, in February, following the November election, (I had never belonged to a Republican organization) Lelia said, "Pat, the Republican women's club here in Orange is going to be meeting at my house in February." (She told me this a couple of weeks before) "It's an evening meeting. I sure wish you'd come." I said, "Well, okay," out of favor to her. The last thing I was really interested in was joining a group of Republican women.

In the first place, I'd seen enough in the campaign to know that most of them were twenty years or thirty years older than I, and just not interested. But out of courtesy and love for Lelia, I said, "Okay, I'll go."

So I did. It was election of officers that night. They came to report of the nominating committee, and here was the nominating committee's nominee for president, Pat Hitt. I was just stunned. I turned to Lelia and said, "I don't even belong." She said, "Oh yes you do, honey. I paid your dues two weeks ago." [Laughter]

Stein: Oh, no!

Hitt: And there it was! It was the last thing in the world I wanted to do, but here I was sitting in a room with a whole group of women that I'd worked with in a campaign and they'd done things for me. What was I going to do or say? So I became president of the Orange Republican Women's Club and served I guess four years. The two-year terms.

Stein: I have the dates here somewhere. Yes, in '56 you were re-elected.

Hitt: No, I think '56 I was elected president of the Orange County Federation of Republican Women.

Stein: That's right, you were.

Hitt: I served in the Orange Club from '52 or the spring of '53 until '56. As president of the Orange Club, I was automatically a member of the board of directors of the county federation. Then in about, I guess, '54 or '55 (somewhere in there), I was elected vice-president of the county federation, and stayed on as the Orange Club president. Then in '56, I was elected president of the Orange County Federation. In that position, I automatically served--how familiar are you with the Federation set-up. Somewhat?

Stein: Some.

Hitt: Then you know what I'm talking about. As the president of the Orange County Federation, I was automatically a member of the board of directors of the Southern Division, California Federation of Republican Womens Clubs.

Stein: Of the southern division of the state federation.

Hitt: So I served on the board of southern division, state federation, and then was appointed, I think in '58 for the first time, as a member of the board of the state federation.

Stein: Of the whole state?

Hitt: The whole state. Not elected--I never served an elective office. I was appointed, and I served on the board of directors of the state federation. Or maybe it was '60. I can't remember whether it was six years or four years I served. But during that period, I put together these schools of politics which the federation had, wrote the format, organized them, starting them, these traveling one-day seminar schools of politics, the basic how-to.

Stein: What sort of things would you do?

Hitt: We would go into a county and set up this one-day seminar, and the various state and local women would take different topics. They worked from the book that I had written, as to what the seminar was to cover.

Stein: You pulled this booklet together by yourself then?

Hitt: The whole course. I wrote and put together the entire course. It was used for years and years and years. It covered precincts and it covered public relations. It covered attitudes, it covered the federation. It was a major undertaking. I don't know if it's still used or not. But it was for a long time.

Stein: Do you still have a copy of that?

Hitt: I have no idea whether I do not.

Stein: That sounds like a really important piece of historical documentation.

Hitt: It probably was, but I didn't think about it. I'll look if you remind me. Make a list of the things you want me to look for, if anything else comes up, and I'll look for it tonight. I have cleaned out my files so many many many times that I seriously doubt that I still have it, but I'll see if I do. It was used for a good ten years or more.

Stein: And this was when, did you say, that these started to be used?

Hitt: I think in '58 and '60, but I'm not sure. I'm not sure whether I did all this before I became national committeewoman in 1960 or after. I was doing the schools, I was touring the state with the troupe, the dog and pony show [laughter], when I was national committeewoman. I don't remember whether--if I can find it, it'll be dated. I was national committeewoman, which would have been some time after '60: '61, '62.

The years that I was national committeewoman, I was very very active in the state federation, not as an officer, but in committees and in special projects, many things, the schools of politics which I think we did once a year, those things. I was extraordinarily active.

One of the reasons I think--well, I won't say "if I'm effective." That's kind of a false modesty. I was effective in campaigns. One of the major reasons that I was able to be effective in campaigns is because I had such an enormous reservoir of women to draw from the federation. I couldn't have done it if I hadn't had the federation behind me. The contact of people that I knew, people that I worked

Hitt: with--there's no way on earth that I could have done all of this without them. Most of what I did in this state in campaigns was transferred to the '68 campaign.

California was a long ways ahead of most of the other states in federation activities and in campaigning. We were light years ahead of most of the others. Many of the programs were things that I had instigated in the [George] Murphy campaign or in the [Robert] Finch campaign or within the federation and either learned or instigated or done in the campaign, or as national committeewoman. But they were new to the rest of the country. Many of them were simply things I transferred from campaigns in California to a national level.

Stein: You talked about these one-day schools-of-politics seminars that you organized. Was anything like that done anywhere else in the country.

Hitt: Not that I know of. It was the only one. I'm sure that there weren't many of them, because when we'd go back to the national conventions of the federation, or go back to those spring conferences that the national committee put on every year, what we were talking about and what we had done was news to everybody. The national committee took a lot of it and used it from then on.

Stein: I noticed in a clipping in your scrapbook that in 1961 you were named the California conference chairman for the ninth annual Republican women's conference in Washington, D.C.

Hitt: Well, that's the one that's put on by the national committee. The national committeewomen headed the conference. I did it because I was the national committeewoman. I had been to several of them before, starting in the fifties. They were held every year or every two years. Then Marjorie Benedict, who was my predecessor on the national committee, Marjorie had headed it up. It was something that's automatically the responsibility of the national committeewoman, because these were staged by the Republican national committee, the women's division. Either Bertha Adkins or Clare Williams or later Ellie Peterson--whoever was the national co-chairman of the Republican party, not the federation, headed it. These were not federation events, though I would say that probably sixty-five or seventy percent of the women who attended were federation members. The federation had its own convention separate. There are conventions every two years.

Downey Women

Social Activities

FAMILY LIFE • CLUBS

Edited by Mary Lou Hamilton—WALNUT 3-1223

Republican women to
hear Mrs. Pat Hitt

By MRS. OMAR K. GRAEF

The Downey Republican Federated Women is the 85th and youngest of the Los Angeles County Federation of Republican Women's Club. Organized in October and it now has 221 members. Meetings are open to the public, members and guests and membership is open to all registered Republicans. Mrs. Robert H. Savage is the president and her executive board of eight members, plus a standing committee of three members comprise the official staff.

The unit will meet 10 a. m. Monday in the parish hall of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 1654 South Downey Ave.

A get-acquainted coffee hour will begin at 10 a. m. and the program will begin promptly at 10:30. Mrs. Humbert Boezinger is the program chairman.

The speaker will be Mrs. Patricia Hitt of Orange, the new Republican National Committee woman from California. She is one of two representatives from California on the National Committee. Mrs. Hitt is a third generation Californian, and attended Whittier schools and U.S.C. where she received her B.S. degree in education. She has been active in community and civic work since college days.

She has two sons, 18 and 14, and has held offices in PTA, been a Cub Scout Den Mother, and served on the Orange County Board of Education. She is a member of the Board of Governors of Chapman College and the Chamber of Commerce committee on growth and development of urban areas.

Mrs. Hitt has been equally active in the Republican Party for several years, served as president of Orange County Federation of Women's Clubs, a member of the board of directors, California Federation of Republican Women, Southern Division, vice-chairman, Orange County Federation Central Committee and a member of the California State Republican Central Committee.

Mrs. Hitt Will Attend
Washington Conference

Mrs. Robert J. Hitt of the Newport Harbor Federated Republican Women's Club has been named California Conference chairman for the Ninth Annual Republican Women's Conference in Washington, D. C. March 5 through 7, 1961 at the Sheraton-Park Hotel.

The conference will be under the direction of Mrs. Clare B. Williams, assistant chairman of the Republican National Committee.

The conference has been called annually since 1953 to rally the extensive organizational effort of GOP women.

Mrs. Pat Hitt will head a large delegation of Republican workers and leaders from all parts of the State to the three-day series of political work sessions in the nation's capitol.

In Washington, Assistant Chairman Williams said, "Women were the backbone of our vigorous 1960 Republican campaign. Millions of regular party workers and enthusiastic GOP volunteers can take pride in a splendid job.

Many first-timers are eager to continue their work for the Republican cause and the Women's Conference is their best means of training for further political activity, alongside women of wide experience," she stated.

The effective work of Republican women was evident in the gains in party strength chalked up November 8. Republicans elected two new United States Senators, 22 additional house members, and took control of 14 state legislatures — an increase of seven.

"From now on we shall concentrate on enlarging our gains within the States, recapturing the White House and shifting the Congressional balance of power by electing more GOP members to Congress," she continued.

"Every panel, speech and work session of the Conference will be designed to engage the entire Party structure in a sustained fight at local, state and national levels.

Each year Republican women travel to Washington at their own expense to learn the newest political techniques.

Plans for them should shape up into one of the most ambitious and successful conferences to date."

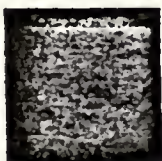
Top party leaders traditionally participate in the conference. The meetings keep women in the field posted, instruct them in new campaign techniques and inspire the over-all party effort.

PATRICIA HITT (MRS. ROBERT), Chapter IE, Orange, Cal. was named to the 26-member executive committee of the Republican national committee by the G.O.P. national chairman, Thurston Morton. Mrs. Hitt is currently Republican national committeewoman for California, succeeding Mrs. Marjorie Benedict last summer. She now becomes a member of the Republican top strategy and policy-making body.

Pat has been active in other community affairs in Orange. Since moving here in 1951 she has been a home and school league president, member of the board of directors of the Orange assistance league, on the board of governors of Chapman college, vice chairman of Chapman college centennial committee, on the layman's committee for better schools, vice chairman of the Orange county republican central committee and president of both Orange City and Orange County Republican Women's clubs.

She is a second generation P. E. O. Her mother, Mrs. Vera Riley, is a 30-year member of Chapter CU, Whittier.

Pat received her B.A. degree at the University of Southern California in education, majoring in that field. Her husband, Robert, and sons, John and Ricky, are quite proud of their wife and mother, along with Chapter IE.



Lelia Baeskins

Stein: Could we talk just a couple of minutes about some of the women in the federation? I think it's an important area to document, and we won't be able to interview all the women, and not all of them are still alive. You mentioned Lelia Baeskins.

Hitt: Yes, Lelia is alive, but Lelia retired from politics soon after I came on the scene. I realized and found out later she'd been looking for me. Not Pat Hitt, but she'd been looking for somebody for a long time that she could groom that could take over what had been her role in this county in political campaigns.

As soon as that happened, she got out of it, retired, and became very active--she said it was time for her to give time to the church--in the Catholic church. Her husband was a rancher. They now live in Oregon, so you wouldn't be able to interview her. She's not here.

Stein: What do you remember about her particular skills and her particular strengths?

Hitt: That she could work and did work in a man's world. In those days, politics was a man's world, really. Now when I say "politics," I don't mean the federation. I mean campaigns and central committee and the real guts.

Stein: The nitty-gritty.

Hitt: The nitty-gritty. I mean, the decision making. Not the precinct work, not the addressing and the stamping envelopes and all of this kind of thing in the headquarters. But the real decision making, the brokering, the major part of politics and campaigns were a man's world. The thing that I learned so much from Lelia: she could work in a man's world and never lose her femininity. She was never masculine with it. That was a great gift.

Things may be different now, but believe me, that was a very important part of it. If you wanted to live and be active and be treated equally in that world, it had to be that way, because the minute a woman got masculine or anything like that, the men were turned off. That was the end of it. You could be just as tough and you could advocate your side, but you had to do it by persuasion, with some degree of femininity. You didn't do it with four-letter words or you'd just turn them off.

I remember in the old days you had to learn that while you didn't use those four-letter words yourself, believe me, when they were used in your presence, you didn't blink. That was in the days

Hitt: before they became a common part of our language. Because if you did [get upset], you weren't going to last very long. It was a man's world. If you made men uncomfortable, if they couldn't speak with the candor the same as they'd speak with a group of men because there was a woman in the room, you soon just weren't effective. You just didn't hear it. You just didn't blink, you didn't hear it, you didn't let on that it had ever been said so that nobody was embarrassed. They were not constrained in any way.

That and the fact that Lelia would give whatever time it took to do a job. She was never satisfied with half way. She was a great organizer, but she was good [with] detail too. She just would not settle for a mediocre result.

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Hitt: Some people have a basic instinct for politics and campaigns. You either do or you don't. There is such a thing as a very basic instinct, just an instinct that tells you what's right or what's wrong, what's going to work and what isn't going to work, and that also throws up caution flags and makes you think, "All right. Is this going to turn so-and-so off? What's going to be the effect of this?"

There are not too many people that have it, men or women. It takes an enormous amount of tact and a great respect for the volunteer. These are all things that I think I knew anyway, but certainly if I didn't I learned them from her. That's what it takes to be effective. You have to have great respect and understanding and tact and compassion with volunteer workers, or you won't have an organization. They're all you have, so you've got to have that basic feeling for them that makes what they're doing as important as what you're doing, without being condescending in any way. You know that you couldn't do your job without them, and you have to let them know that. You have to be super-tactful. You can't blow up at them. Getting along with people, that's what it's all about.

Stein: Those are difficult things to learn.

Hitt: Yes, and particularly if you're not born with an instinct of tact or feeling for the other fellow. If you can't put yourself in the other person's shoes--

Stein: Am I correct in remembering about Lelia Baeskins that she ran that ranch pretty much by herself?

Hitt: Yes. Her husband was a rancher. Frank was a rancher, but Frank ranched a huge, huge lease, acres of leased property from Irvine Company in lima beans. So he was busy with hundreds and hundreds of acres that

Hitt: was their primary income; that was leased land, most of it. So Lelia ran the ranch, the home ranch, the citrus ranch that they lived on themselves. Lelia could have done anything. I don't know that she ever got up on top of that tractor and plowed, but I'm sure she could have.

Other Federation Leaders

Stein: Do you remember any other women in the federation that seemed particularly important or influential on your career?

Hitt: Indirectly Jean Wood Fuller. Though I never knew Jean very well--she was at the top when I was just beginning--I had great respect and admiration for her. She had a wonderful way of doing things and was a good executive, a good, level-headed, sensible person.

Bertha Adkins had an enormous influence on me. Nationally, I would say that Bertha Adkins and Clare Williams had great impacts on me. Elly Peterson not so much because Elly and I were on the same level. We probably impacted on each other. We were very much the same. But it wasn't learning from Elly. I was still in the process of getting up to that top level with Bertha and with Clare--two very different people: Bertha the soul of tact and kindness and soft-spoken, and bright and got things done; Clare the complete antithesis, dry and abrasive. But she got things done. I learned something indirectly at least.

As far as California is concerned, Gladys O'Donnell, who is now dead, certainly I think of all of the California leaders stands out. Now I never knew Marjorie [Benedict] very well. Marjorie was kind of an intimidating person. Marjorie was not one of the girls as national committeewoman. It's just different. I liked Marjorie, but she isn't the kind that you'd ever be close to or learn much of anything from.

As far as the state goes, I would say of all of the women that I ever knew in California politics, Gladys O'Donnell was head and shoulders, a million light-years above anyone else, the only one that I would have to say that professionally I respected totally. The others I didn't, the others that I knew that came later. I just didn't, particularly. I didn't dislike them, but I don't know exactly how it works. I just had a very different feeling toward Gladys and Lucile Hosmer, for example.

I don't know if you've ever interviewed Lucile.

Stein: I haven't, but Mrs. Chall has.

- Hitt: Gladys and I were much more the same. We were much closer. Gladys and I were pretty much moderates right down the middle, and very practical. Lucile was much more on the conservative side. I think she's gotten very much involved in Pro America later. She's more that. She's more the DAR, Pro America bent and philosophy, not a very pragmatic politician. She's more a theorist, she never achieved major status in the senior party. She did a lot of talking. She did a lot of going around. She presided over a lot of meetings. She did lots of seminars. She was quoted in Human Events. But within her own party organization here in the state or nationally, she never had any real impact. There really hasn't been anyone else since that has. Ann Bowler was laughed at more often than followed.
- Stein: Maybe you can tell me a little bit about Ann Bowler. We'll just jump a little out of chronological order.
- Hitt: Are you going to see her? She's in Catalina.
- Stein: I don't think so. We don't have time or the budget to see everybody.
- Hitt: Well, if you're trying to hit the top, I'm sorry Gladys is dead, because that would have been the obvious one. If you're trying to hit the women who really achieved and the women who had the respect of their party and the respect of more than their own Congressman at home, but across the board and so on, then I wouldn't have sent you to Lucile Hosmer. It's a hard thing to explain. Lucile and I are good friends. We got along well. We worked together well. But Lucile was never the force that she thought she was. I worked with so many of the legislators on the national and the state level, and I know what was said. Ann Bowler far less.
- Stein: I think that Mrs. Hosmer was interviewed at least in part because she represents a point of view that we wanted to document.
- Hitt: That's right. And she was the state federation president.
- Stein: Yes. She was the most important person representing that point of view who we could find. As a matter of fact, we have a problem at the moment because she had a stroke in the last few months.
- Hitt: I didn't know that.
- Stein: The interviewing wasn't completed and it's unclear whether she'll be able to finish the interview or not. Mrs. Chall has been looking around trying to see if there is another person who can replace her who would represent the conservative end of the spectrum.
- Hitt: Does it have to be of exactly the same vintage?
- Stein: No--

Hitt: I would say Elsa Sandstrom probably comes the closest. Elsa was a close friend of Lucile's. They served together. The two philosophically are very much the same. Elsa was national committee-woman up until the last couple of years, and she was very active in the federation. I would say, as far as I know, she's the closest parallel that I would know of to Lucile.

Stein: Good. I'll suggest that to Mrs. Chall.

There are a couple of other women in the federation whose names have come up from time to time whom I wondered if you knew. Dorothy Goodknight was one name.

Hitt: Oh yes, very well. Dorothy Goodknight was a protege of Gladys O'Donnell. They were very, very close. When Gladys went to Washington as the national federation president, Dorothy went with her. Dorothy by that time was widowed. Gladys was also widowed, and Dorothy went with her as her executive secretary for the national federation president. They were very close. Philosophically they were right together. It was a chief and an Indian sort of thing. Dorothy's a wonderful person. I think she was a very good federation president.

I think she managed to keep things fairly level, on an even keel, but she made some very tough decisions and very unpopular decisions. It happened to be that I think they needed to be made, because during that time we could begin to see--this is again a difference of viewpoint. I say that we could begin to see the federation slipping and the loss of effectiveness. Now someone who was an extreme conservative on the right wing would say that it was not so, they were getting stronger. I don't know what they'd say about the dropoff in membership if it were acknowledged or admitted. But we could begin to see the federation losing the broad base of all types and being dominated by the very conservative.

Dorothy, as federation president, made some controversial appointments. She made some controversial decisions in the effort to keep the federation from becoming a junior edition of the John Birch Society.

Stein: I notice on my list here that she followed Lucile Hosmer as president, so she must have been trying to reverse a trend, perhaps?

Hitt: Well, not so much reverse a trend, because in those days Lucile wasn't really quite that much. But yes, she was. There was Gladys O'Donnell, who was basically conservative in many ways, but a moderate from the standpoint of a very practical politician who realized that you've got to have it all, all kinds. You can't have it all one way.

Hitt: When the chips were down fiscally, Gladys was more conservative some ways than I. Yet God knows I wouldn't put myself way out on the left wing. The ultra rights would. The ultra lefts would put me over the other way.

There was Gladys and then there was Lucile. There was a reversal, yes. There was a change there in direction and an increasing influence of one factor, sector, but not to the point where it was getting scary or worrisome to those of us who felt differently. Dorothy did try to reverse it, and after Dorothy it just went downhill rapidly from '64 on.

The Goldwater candidacy had a far greater impact on the Republican party across the nation and nationally than simply the loss of a presidential election, because it was a particular philosophy that took over the party, so to speak, in many states. It drove a lot of others out and lasted for a long, long time. The impact was far greater, I think, on the party than the loss of the election, on the internal structure of the party and its organizations.

Stein: Now I noticed that your term on the board of directors in the southern division ended in '65, so it was about that same period?

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: Did that have anything to do with this conservative drift?

Hitt: Yes. I'm trying to think who followed Dorothy Goodknight as state president.

Stein: Mrs. Donald Krotz, Virila Krotz.

Hitt: Well, I served on the board under Virila. Then from Virila it went to--

Stein: Here's the list [hands Mrs. Hitt list of officers of California Federation of Republican Women*].

Hitt: You can see when I began to get less involved. [Reviews list] Here's Marie Solberg.

Stein: Dorothy Goodknight--

*See next page.

PAST PRESIDENTS

Mrs. Lawrence A. Solberg 1974-1975	125 South Park Drive Madera, 93637
Mrs. Harry Umhey 1972-1973	2639 N. Commonwealth Ave. Los Angeles, 90027
Mrs. Warren Sandstrom 1970-1971	High Valley Ranch, Star Rte., Stonyford, 95979
Mrs. Louis Lombardi 1968-1969	1945 W. Mountain St. Glendale, 91201
Mrs. Donald Krotz 1966-1967	44 Monte Vista Rd. Orinda, 94563
Mrs. Logan H. Goodknight 1964-1965	2045 Appleton St., Apt. 8 Long Beach, 90803
Mrs. Lucille Hosmer 1961-1963	P. O. Box 846 San Carlos, 94070 <i>deceased</i>
Mrs. R. G. Kenyon 1957-1960	Deceased
Mrs. Gladys Leggett Penland 1955-1956	Deceased
Mrs. Gladys O'Donnell 1954-12/1954	Deceased
Mrs. Jâen Wood Fuller 1951-9/1954	2301 Alden Lane Santa Rosa, 95404
Mrs. Paul G. Jasper 1949-1950	390 N. Winchester Blvd. #1-4-P Santa Clara, 95050
Mrs. Barbara Whittaker 1945-1948	Deceased
Mrs. Jessie Williamson 1943-1944	
Mrs. Edith Van de Water 1932-1942	Deceased
Mrs. O.P. Clark 1925-1931	Deceased

Hitt: --and then Virla Krotz. There was no common meeting ground between Angela Lombardi and me. None whatever. There was an animosity and a difference of opinion that went back a long, long way. There would have been no way on earth that she would have asked me to serve, and there was no way on earth that I could have served in her regime. But however, you see also that I was in Washington, D.C. from January 1 of '68 on.

Had I been here, I wouldn't have been [on the federation board]. But I did serve on the state board under Virla. Now I think it was-- I don't know whether it was up until the time that I went to Washington in January of '68 or whether it was partway through. I don't know what my bio says, even. I don't remember.

Stein: Let's see. [Consults file]

Hitt: But it doesn't matter that much. I can't remember whether I was still a member of the state federation board at the time I went to Washington or whether I had resigned prior to that, knowing that I was going to go.

Stein: The Who's Who entry says '64. It says, 'Member California board of federation '60-'64, board of directors of the southern division, '55-'60."

Hitt: The '64 is incorrect, because I served on the state board the whole time that Dorothy Goodknight was president and as I remember, the full term of Virla Krotz. So it really should read 'til '67 or '68. Marie Solberg might be able to help you with Lucille too. She goes back into that time. I really don't know. Elsa would be the obvious one. Or Marie Solberg, yes. They would know. As I said, it may be a totally different picture than I would have, but at least you could depend on what they say as being facts as they see it.

A Dispute Over Pre-primary Endorsements

Stein: One of the things I noticed in a clipping in your scrapbook was that there was some sort of dispute in 1968 that actually went to court involving the California federation. What's the story there?

Hitt: That's part of the problem between Angela Lombardi and me. That arose in the [Robert] Finch campaign [1966]. Well, it didn't arise in the Finch campaign either, but there was a contributing factor.

[Tape interruption]

Hitt: I can remember what some of the catalysts were, but I can't remember exactly. This was basically this philosophical struggle within the federation between the extreme right domination and a more moderate viewpoint resisting that, resisting being almost literally read out, with no influence.

One of the pieces of it was during the Finch campaign. There's a bylaw, a federation bylaw, that says that the federation, a club, or a president may not pre-primary endorse a candidate. As I talk it out, maybe I'll think through whether this was a major part or what. During the Finch campaign, I was the state women's chairman for the Finch campaign. That's why I know I was still on the state board. That was '68, and I was still on the state board.

A discussion came up at the state board meeting on it. During the Finch campaign, we had a small fund-raising gimmick called "Fashions for Finch." We had made contact with some wholesale manufacturers of moderately priced clothes in Los Angeles, whereby we could buy from them or order from them at a wholesale price. Then we would stage these fashion shows all over the state or go over Southern California, wherever anybody was interested, with these clothes and then take orders for them.

The Finch campaign made the profit. The profit was made for the campaign, above costs. The federation women modeled and assisted at the fashion show. That was one of my gimmicks. A number of the federation clubs used this "Fashions for Finch" as a program. It was never my understanding, it was never Goodknight's or O'Donnell's or anybody else's understanding--we did not take that as a pre-primary endorsement, because any club could have candidates come and speak.

There had long been a desire on the part of the southern division, the federation, under Angela Lombardi to bring down the Orange County federation, which was in moderate hands and a very strong and independent federation. When one of these was done in Orange County, the state federation took the stand that it was a pre-primary endorsement, and said that they would lift the Orange County charter.

At that point, the Orange County federation, under Mrs. Donald Gary, who was president of the county federation, took it to court to try to prevent them from pulling the charter. At that time, the federation bylaws were very loose. It could have had either one of two interpretations as to whether a county federation had to belong to a division or could it belong to just the state. It was so loose.

You see, only Southern California had county federations. It was only the southern division that had county units that were separate units, strata of organization, in themselves. The central division and the northern division did not have it. They operated differently, so that it was not at all clear in the bylaws whether

Hitt: or not a county in Southern California could indeed voluntarily withdraw from southern division, that level, pay no dues or anything else, and still be a member of the state federation, or whether they did have to live under the directives of the division. That was part and parcel--really, Finch and the pre-primary endorsement was a peripheral thing in the suit. It was an attempt by southern division to pull the charter.

The battle all along was well, all right, if southern division pulls the charter, can the county federation per se be a member of the state or not? The court did decide, and I'm being very general (there was a lot of other stuff with it, because it went on for weeks and weeks and weeks). But generally the courts decided that the county federation was a part of southern division, and that they could not withdraw, and that they had to come under the directives of the division federation.

The state federation had taken the attitude that this was not a pre-primary endorsement. The division had. So as a result of this, there were several of the clubs, the individual clubs here in Orange County, that withdrew from the federation completely and formed an independent group. They're not a part of the federation. The Orange County Council of Republican Women is how they became known and are today.

But basically [raps table for emphasis] the whole thing was a struggle between the total dominance of the right wing over the rest of the party. That was basically it. Yes, I was involved in it. I was deeply involved in it because of the Finch campaign. I was also involved in it because I was member of the Orange County group here and my sentiments were very much with Orange County. I thought that the southern division was way off base, completely wrong in it. So yes, I did get in it.

Stein: What did you do?

Hitt: Well, I got Murray Chotiner as an attorney for them, to start with. I was the one that approached Murray, because the county central committee was refusing to take part. The Republican attorneys of prominence in this county didn't really want to take on this thing, because the county central committee was hands-off on it. They wanted no part of it. It was a no-win thing, because it was going to make enemies no matter which, because you had half of the clubs in Orange County on one side and half on the other. Murray was the kind that if he thought it was right, he didn't care who liked it or didn't like it. So yes, I got him, and then I also testified and was involved in court trial. I was one of those who testified. At the time when that case was lost, I moved and have stayed with those clubs that broke away. I have not been a member of the federation since. I belong to Republican women's clubs, but not the federation.

Stein: The group that broke away is called the Council--?

Hitt: It's the Orange County Council of Republican Women. There are two or three clubs in the county that belong to that. There are also people outside the county, women outside the county, who belong to it.

Stein: That's quite a story.

Hitt: I wish I could remember more about it. If you ever get to the point where you want to go into it, Dorothy Gary would probably remember it. Her mind's like a steel trap. Although if she didn't want to discuss it, Ann Spencer, Dorothy Beaver--there's a lot of gals around that would remember a lot more about it, though they weren't even as much involved. They would remember more. The only reason you might want to pursue this is that I may be hazy on some of what I said. I've only given you my recollections without thinking through, without going back through any files. I suppose that it would be a landmark thing, because it's the only time I know of that a party organization, women's organization--one piece of it's gone to court, gone that far and gone to court and sued another. I suppose it is a landmark to that extent.

The newspaper accounts were singularly inaccurate. Howard Seeley's reports--he was covering it for the L.A. Times--are unbelievably inaccurate. If it's anything that's worth looking into, don't take it just from what I remember. Heaven knows, don't take it as history from the Seeley articles, because it was a most inaccurate reporting job. He was there in court all the time, but he really got messed up on this one. I don't think he ever really understood who were the cast of characters. He never did his homework.

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Hitt: The whole thing was extraordinarily emotional. You know, there's nothing quite like a fight between women. When you've got a political philosophy and strong women involved, you've really got something. I would say that I don't think there's ever been anything quite like it in Orange County politics, in either party, quite as emotional and quite as violent. It went on over a period of months. It did end up by establishing a clarification as to the jurisdictions of the federation. I haven't been involved in the federation since. It's not that I got mad and left it. It's just that I had no stomach for the leadership. Then by that time, we were getting close to '68. We were into something else. I left shortly after for the campaign.

Stein: Yes. The article that I saw in your scrapbook was dated January 16, 1968 in the Los Angeles Times, and that was reporting the end of it.

Hitt: That article was probably the decision of the court, because I left on January 1, '68, so the court case was over as far as witnesses' appearances or anything else. The judge brought in his decision.

Stein: Yes, this is reporting the decision. This was the tail end.

Hitt: Gladys O'Donnell was involved in that. So was Dorothy Goodknight. It went beyond just the county. The whole state was involved. Then later, under Gladys O'Donnell as national president, the national federation adopted a policy that an individual Republican women's club can belong to the national only if they want to, or they can belong to the state-- In order to be a member of the national federation, they are not required to be a member of any other in-between level of the federation.

It went that far, even after the court case was decided. It went to the national federation board meetings for two or three years.

Stein: That was, I suppose, to avoid any future recurrences of that sort of conflict.

Hitt: I think probably, the policy thing. It even all got wound up in the Phyllis Schlafly thing eventually.

Stein: Which Phyllis Schlafly thing?

Hitt: Well, the battle of Phyllis Schlafly and Gladys O'Donnell on the national federation level for that presidency. Her campaign indirectly even got involved in that because the ultra-conservatives were very pro-Schlafly after that [court fight], very anti-O'Donnell. Its ramifications were much greater than the actual days in court.

Stein: When was that Schlafly fight? I can't remember. I thought it was before then.

Hitt: Well, let's see. Gladys was in her first term as federation president in the '68 campaign. We worked that together. The Schlafly-O'Donnell battle was probably about '66 or '67. It's at whatever point, whether they met in an even year or an odd year.

Stein: So it was right in the middle of all that.

Hitt: It was right in the middle, and that even got drawn into it. It was an incredible kind of a thing.

Stein: That's amazing. What I may want to do is go back and read up more about that.

Hitt: You'll want to get both sides of it, so you may want to interview Angela. I don't know. But from the Orange County standpoint, there would be three people that would be the best source for you. That would be either Dorothy Gary, whose husband passed away fairly recently, I understand. He was a Congressional Medal of Honor winner. She went back with the body to be buried at Arlington. Whether she's back home now or not--I don't know how recent it was. I didn't know about it at the time.

Anyway, either she or Dorothy Beaver or Ann Spencer here in Orange County. If you decide you want to, I can tell you how to get hold of any of them, because they've been more involved in it and they were more involved in the aftermath. They would remember better. I had too many things to clutter up my mind since.

The Schlafly-O'Donnell Dispute

Stein: Did you know anything yourself of that Phyllis Schlafly-Gladys O'Donnell fight?

Hitt: Oh God yes, I'll say. I was right in the middle of it.

Stein: What happened?

Hitt: Now I'm sure that you mean not just the whole--of course, the whole general difference of opinion and fights in the campaigns went on for several years. But the one that was focused on in the newspapers was the big fight between the two of them for the presidency of the National Federation of Republican Women.

Stein: That's right.

Hitt: Yes, I do know about it. Probably Pat Hutar and I know more, now that Gladys is dead, with the possible exception--I think Pat Hutar and I probably know more about it even than Dorothy Goodknight. We were the four people that were primarily involved in that campaign and convention. I was supporting Gladys right down the line, even before that.

Had it not been Gladys O'Donnell, I'm sure that I would have supported almost anyone else other than Phyllis Schlafly, because I have always personally--I don't know her well. I've met her several times and seen her--I have always personally considered her to be, if not dangerous, pretty close to it, because I think she's irresponsible in her research and everything else. I think she's so biased. The things I've read of her, everything that she has done. She's a brilliant gal. I don't know--do you want all this?

Stein: Yes.

Hitt: She's a very bright girl and she's a very attractive woman, very attractive and extremely articulate. She's a stem-winder as a speaker, but my own personal philosophy is to err on the cautious side, when you take on anything or you're taking a stand. In other words, if there was any doubt as to both sides, or the facts of the thing, I would tend to be more cautious, make more of an attempt to maybe show both sides, or indicate that there is another side.

I think Phyllis tends to get hysterical. I don't think that she's objective at all. I would have probably supported almost anyone else within reason rather than her, but it happened, of course, that Gladys O'Donnell was a close friend of mine. I thought she was marvelous, that she'd been in the organization for years, she was ready for it, it was ready for her.

Frankly, there wasn't anyone involved in the Nixon campaign during '68 or prior to '68 that wanted to have the problem of Phyllis Schlafly as the National Federation of Republican Women president in a presidential campaign year. No way!

Stein: Oh, of course. I never even thought of that.

Hitt: No way did anyone in the campaign want that. Now I'll digress a little here as I think of things or elaborate. Now I don't also mean to infer that anyone in the Nixon campaign actively participated. There was no money given to Gladys for her campaign or anything like that. There was no particularly active participation. I'm trying to think what the year was; it's going to help me. I've got to recall--

Stein: The federation election was in '67.

Hitt: So you see it was the year before the campaign year of '68. However, Nixon had already decided that he was going to run and be a candidate. There already was the beginnings of a campaign organization for him. As a matter of fact, there were campaign directors as early as June or July of '67.

Stein: That's right.

Hitt: I was not involved in it. I'm trying to think. Gaylord Parkinson-- I don't think he was the first. I think he was the second. He left the campaign in the fall of '67.

Stein: That's right. You mentioned this last time. There was somebody else in there who left to run for governor.

Hitt: And then Henry Bellman came in in the fall of '67. Henry Bellman was the nominal chairman at the time when I entered the campaign, actively, in Washington on January 1, 1968.

But anyway, because there was a considerable amount of campaign activity already started, the groundwork for Nixon, there was a great deal of interest and concern in that campaign. No one, me or anyone else involved, relished the idea of a Phyllis Schlafly, a headline hunter, heading up that huge volunteer organization that really is the underpinnings when it comes to the campaign workers, the volunteer workers of any presidential campaign or Senate campaigns in our party. Not much any more, but at that time it was. The federation has dropped off in membership and power and influence since then, but in '68 it was at a high point.

Again, I was not involved [in the federation election] as a part of the Nixon campaign. Nobody that was in the Nixon campaign-- I was in it [the federation campaign] as Pat Hitt, but I'm sure that the Nixon campaign people were delighted that people known to be loyal and interested in Nixon were involved in that federation business.

So anyway, it came down to, really, that there were four primary people involved in Gladys's campaign. There was Gladys, of course, herself. Dorothy Goodknight, who was a very close friend and associate of hers, and active, and had followed her as state president. Pat Hutar, who had been, years before, national co-chairman of Young Republicans, which is where most of us first knew her, and then when she got through with that, had been active in the federation, was an officer, had been active in the Goldwater campaign of '64, had been the national co-chairman of the Republican party, and a good friend of Gladys's and a very responsible person. And myself. That was the campaign leadership.

We started months ahead organizing for it. Fortunately, Dorothy Elston, who was the then-president of the national federation, was very pro-O'Donnell. Now, Dorothy couldn't do anything, you know. She couldn't be a major part of campaign strategy or anything, but she was able to do a great deal indirectly to help us. But I didn't name her as one of the four, because after all she was presiding at that convention, and did her level best to preside in a fair and judicious manner. But she definitely was for Gladys, so that meant that ahead of time, ahead of the convention, we had the opportunity to make a lot of contacts, which if Dorothy had been opposed to Gladys, might have been difficult for us to establish.

But long before we went to that convention, we had federation women lined up; virtually one hundred percent of the state federation presidents were lined up behind Gladys, and so were the state officers and the prominent women in the federation and almost all of

Hitt: the national committeepeople, because while I wasn't still on the national committee, I still knew most of them. They knew the two women, and the national committee tended to be more on the moderate side and less on the extreme right, which is what Phyllis was. When we went into the convention, we were very, very well organized.

Phyllis was well organized too, in that she had lots of troops there. Let's face it, a great deal of our strength and Gladys's strength came out of California. Well, you just couldn't get thousands of California women who could go back there, even though not as delegates, but just to be there. Phyllis coming from Illinois, and with a considerable amount of her strength in the deep South, the conservative deep South, had far more gallery attendees that we did, if you know what I mean, like you do in a convention, that could make more noise and be, as it turned out, more disruptive in many ways.

We felt quite confident that we had a good healthy majority of the delegates. But you never know what's going to happen when they get there. As it turned out--Pat and I ran the strategy of the convention. I was the top name, but she was a co-chairman with me, and the two of us worked very much in tandem.

Of course, it was a constant matter of strategy, because we did have most of the large states: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois (even though Phyllis was from there, we did split that up a little), Michigan, Minnesota, California. But there were a lot of the smaller states that were split. There would be a scattering of Schlafly delegates everywhere.

California was split probably sixty-forty in Gladys's home state, because by that time we had a lot of ultra-conservatives in the federation in California as club presidents, and of course that's where the delegates came from. We didn't have the overwhelming majority, but we knew we had the majority in California, which would be a swing state.

That was the most incredible, incredible performance I have ever seen by women whom you would--well, in those days we called them ladies. I've never seen anything like it in my life.

Stein: How were Phyllis's forces disruptive?

Hitt: Vicious. I never in all my life saw anything like them. We were able to hold most of our delegates in line. It was the performance of not only her delegates, but the spectators, I think, that was the turning point and assured Gladys the victory, because it turned people off so. We had some feisty little gals, too, in our delegations. Things got to be extraordinarily emotional. But we

Hitt: didn't have the same kind [as in Phyllis's]. It was an advocacy role. They were feisty and they would argue, but there was not the screaming and the yelling and the catcalls and the booing.

My God, I saw women fling their shoulder bags and hit other women over the head in the gallery! It was an incredible performance. It just got hysterical. I saw women spit on other women. And these were not young, these were middle-aged women. I'm sure under normal circumstances, they would never have behaved that way. I don't think they'd ever done anything like that in their lives. If they knew they did it afterwards, remembered it after the hysteria of the moment, they were probably as shocked or stunned as anyone else.

Now, I didn't hear four-letter words used, but it boiled down to they'd get in an argument as delegates walking up the aisle or in the gallery or anywhere else. The first thing you know, some woman would haul off and hit somebody else with her purse or with an umbrella.

Now I couldn't absolutely say for certain that none of our delegates or our supporters did anything like that. But if they did, it was very, very few, and I'm sure--in my mind, I'm almost dead certain--that it was in response to a physical attack. It was a disgrace! Just a disgraceful kind of thing. Not only that, but the tension that built in that city and in the hotels where the women were and in the hotel where the convention was, over a period of four days, was an incredible thing.

There was lots of maneuvering, cloak-and-dagger kind of thing. There were several women who forcibly locked delegates in their rooms so they couldn't get to the floor. Of course, the credentials fights went on all night long. Sometimes the credentials committee met all night long, because there were many challenges of delegates. We made a few challenges. Most of the challenges were the other way.

Stein: I don't know if you've seen Phyllis's account of what happened.

Hitt: No, I never have.

Stein: As far as I know, it's the only written one. She wrote a book called Safe, Not Sorry. This is the chapter on the convention; I Xeroxed it. [Hands Mrs. Hitt the chapter]* She makes a couple of accusations. One of them has to do with the credentials, which she of course says was extremely biased and very crookedly done and

*Phyllis Schlafly, Safe, Not Sorry (Alton, Ill., 1967), pp. 146-170. The chapter is entitled "The Purge."

Stein: that all of the delegates who were against her were allowed to sit, even though technically some of them weren't even members of the federation and didn't have yellow badges.

Hitt: I haven't read it, so I don't know. Of course, you would say I would be biased another way, too. I was on the other side. But I can honestly say to you that insofar as I know, and I would almost be willing to swear to the fact, there were no shenanigans in the credentials. Most often than not, those delegates that she challenged were left sitting, because they were legal. But the women that were running that committee were women of great prestige and great stature.

I can say to you without equivocation, not Pat Hutar and not myself and not Dorothy Goodknight and not Gladys O'Donnell would have been a part of anything that was crooked or wrong to win anything. We just weren't that kind. I'm sure that to the other side, it would look like that.

If there were any decisions made on delegates contrary to her interests, I think they were honest decisions. Either our delegates made a better appearance for themselves in testimony than the ones that she hoped to seat or what, I don't know.

What was the other thing you mentioned to me? Oh, the seating. The seating on the convention floor was done by states. We had professional help from the Republican National Committee on this, because at the time when we came to the convention, we went to the Republican National Committee and said, 'Look, you've handled national conventions.' The Republican National Committee took no stand. I am sure that probably most of the national committee staff and the national committeepeople would have much preferred Gladys. There were a few people who worked up there who were federation members and did support her. Some of them, from the Virginia and Maryland clubs, were delegates.

But as far as the men and the regular staff, Bill Timmons and Ab Herman and the people that they brought in and made available to us, while there's no doubt in my mind that probably ninety-nine percent of them would have been partial to Gladys, they did not pull shenanigans to do it.

By that point, we could see that this thing was going to be near-violent and controversial, and there was no way, within the federation and by ourselves--we simply did not have the knowledge or the background or the experience on how to seat delegates, where to have walkie-talkies, if we were going to have them, whether or not we'd have walkie-talkies, or mikes, the physical arrangements of the hall and the running of it and the scheduling. We didn't have that kind of expertise, where the national committee naturally did from running national conventions.

Hitt: Bill Timmons, who was very active in the Young Republicans at that time, and was active in the national committee, and knew Pat Hutar and had a great deal of campaign experience--he later was in the Nixon administration. Later on he was involved in the Nixon campaign the following year, and so on. He and three or four others, both Young Republicans and national committee staff, did help us and did act as advisors. But as far as the delegates on the floor are concerned, they were all seated strictly by state, and the states assigned floor space in alphabetical order across the convention hall. There were no women in the delegate section but delegates with their badges, and none but alternates in the other.

Occasionally we would move them. If a delegate was out, an alternate moved into her seat and she would have a different kind of badge. We were very, very careful of that. As a matter of fact, we were extraordinarily careful of all technical details, all the way through. We did not want to take a chance on having a challenge of that convention or that election after it was over that could possibly hold up. Nobody wanted to go through it again. So we were extremely aware of the fact that her [Phyllis Schlafly's] capabilities were certainly there to challenge. She had some good legal minds and some good parliamentarians, people involved in her campaign.

We bent over backwards to do absolutely nothing that could be a legitimate basis for a challenge later. She did challenge, but there was nothing that she could back that challenge up with. It was an incredible thing.

For years afterward, she cried foul or one thing or another, but that election was fairly won. It was a highly emotional thing. Let's face it, Phyllis really had appeared on the scene from nowhere. I think she'd been a committee chairman or something on the national board, or maybe a minor officer, but she wasn't nearly as well known. She didn't have the capability for organizing nationwide as Gladys did at that point.

No, as I said, I haven't read it [the chapter from Safe, Not Sorry]. I could probably sit there and read it and refute virtually any statement, if I knew anything about it at all.

Stein: I think what I'll do is I'll leave that with you, and then you can read that at your leisure. Then when you go over the interview transcript, you can fill in any additional points that come up from your reading of that. I don't think we have time at the moment to go into it point by point.

Hitt: No, that's it. I could do that. Much of it I've forgotten. Let's face it, Mimi, in some of it, as I would refute it or contradict it, it would be my word. My memory wouldn't serve me to say the exact

Hitt: name of the person or the exact circumstance. I would have to say that simply isn't true, but I couldn't offer you proof that would stand up in court. Not that kind of thing.

Stein: That book would hardly stand up in court either, so it's important to get as much information on both sides as we can.

Hitt: But anyway, it was an absolutely incredible thing. We had some bad, bad moments. The last day, there were women who had to catch trains and airplanes, and we suddenly realized that there was a real delaying tactic brought on the other side to force that convention and the voting so late that an awful lot of our delegates would have to leave. Let's face it, they were women with families. They're not as fanatically one-track-minded, win-at-any-cost as the Schlafly followers. We did have to employ some parliamentary procedures to stop off debate and things that Dorothy Elston probably would have let go under normal circumstances. She recognized people who called for the question.

We did have a signal arrangement. Pat Hutar and I sat together. We were both delegates, but we sat together, close up in the front where all of the delegates could see what we were doing as we voted, or as we rose to a point of order or anything like that, so that was the signal. If they couldn't hear us, they could see us. So yes, we did have that kind of a strategy. Nothing illegal, but we did have a system on that floor whereby Pat or I could call a signal, the same as they have it in any national convention or anything like that.

A couple of times, as I said, Dorothy Elston recognized people on a call to question. Probably she knew what they were going to say, that they were going to call the question, because they were delegates that she knew, that she was familiar with. She probably would not have done that had it not been that we suddenly realized that there was a real delaying action abroad to try to hold that thing over for another whole day. A lot of the delegates would have been gone, and out of those delegates that had to leave, I'm sure that ninety percent of them would have been ours, because hers would have stayed forever.

It was parliamentarily correct. Dorothy was smart enough to have a professional woman parliamentarian, who had written many books on it, and had nothing to do with the federation, and no interest whatever, to come and act as principle parliamentarian for that convention, rather than the national federation's own parliamentarian to tell her how to handle everything. That was a traumatic experience for Dorothy Elston.

Hitt: It was a very unruly convention, very difficult to handle. It was a terrible thing for her, but she did it. She had a woman who had authored several books, who could care less who won or what, but was one of the two or three greatest authorities in the country on parliamentary procedure. She was sitting right beside her [Mrs. Elston] every session, every minute.

Stein: I gather from Schlafly's account that Dorothy Elston was subjected to considerable calumny in the press from Phyllis Schlafly.

Hitt: Oh, yes. She was.

Stein: Long before the convention.

Hitt: Long before. It really wasn't justified. She did nothing that I can remember by way of policies or anything like that that was of any more help to one side than the other. But I'm sure the private conversations--sure, I'm sure she said who she was for. I'm sure it was obvious. Gladys was one of her vice-presidents. They were close. But in the conducting of that convention, I don't think she ever did anything that gave one side any advantage over the other, except in the very last when, on the advice of the parliamentarian, she used parliamentary procedures in order to stop the stalling and get the convention over, which ran several hours late anyway, to get it over that day and not try to hold it over one more night.

Stein: Well, I'll leave that with you, and then you can mark it up as much as you want, because we have the original. We can fill in the transcript later.

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[The following was added during the editing process.]

Stein: Now that you've read Phyllis Schlafly's account, do you want to comment on it further?

Hitt: Yes. I consider Mrs. Schlafly's account and the misinterpretations, misconceptions and misrepresentations to border on the hysterical. She has twisted facts and actions to fit the premises she is trying to sustain. As anyone knows it is not difficult for a clever writer (and she is that) to distort facts, actions, conversations and comments as much as necessary to arrive at the desired self-serving conclusions. Having read this account, I personally will never give any credence to any writing or statement of hers in any subject.

Stein: What did you think of Mrs. Schlafly's activities at the recent Houston women's conference?

Hitt: About what I think of her activities on all occasion--divisive, destructive, self-serving and headline-hunting. When she was unable to control the conference or bend it to her personal use, she set up a counter force elsewhere in an attempt to negate and destroy the purpose and the effectiveness of the conference on any issue, not just ERA [Equal Rights Amendment]. Fortunately she did not succeed in destroying the conference or making it an object of ridicule.

##

County and State Central Committees

Troubles with the John Birch Society

Stein: Let's shift gears a little bit here. If I have more to ask about the federation, I'll pick it up the next time.

Hitt: You've probably reached the end of my involvement.

Stein: I also noticed that you were on the various central committees in the county and the state. Now when did that start?

Hitt: Well, let's see. I was a member of the county central committee sometime prior to '56, because at the time that I was a county co-chairman for the Eisenhower-Nixon '56 campaign, I had been on the central committee for quite some time. I think I probably went on the Orange County central committee in about '53, '54, somewhere in there.

I was an appointee on the state central committee of Jimmy Utt's, and probably about the same time.

Stein: He was a congressman then?

Hitt: He was congressman from my district. He's since passed away. When he passed away, then I became [George] Murphy's appointee until '68. Then when I went to Washington, I resigned because I couldn't get to the meetings. I shouldn't have been holding somebody else's spot. I couldn't be active. However, I went off the county committee in about 1960, I think.

Stein: My notes say '62.

Hitt: In '62. I was defeated. The county central committee runs in the supervisorial districts.

Stein: Yes, Who's Who says '62, too.

Hitt: That's probably right. I think the other date that they had was wrong, but I think this date probably was right. You see, I first was in Who's Who, I think, in 1960. Strangely enough, that was the first one. Usually it comes--you're in Who's Who in Women or Who's Who in the West or Who's Who in California or Who's Who in California Politics or something, and it works up to the other one. With me, it started there. So at that time, those figures were clear. I wasn't the least bit confused.

No, I was defeated for county central committee in whenever it was. I would guess that that's what it is, '62.

Stein: Now was that defeat also part of this right-wing, liberal-moderate split?

Hitt: Yes. But not part of the lawsuit part. That was part of the Joe Shell-Richard Nixon battle, that primary campaign for governor in '62, when I was an ardent supporter of Richard Nixon. I was national committee woman campaigning for him. Joe Shell was running against him, and that got into a little bit of an emotional thing. Shell had some strong support here in Orange County. They were incensed that I would be for Nixon; I don't know why. I'd been for him since '46, but they were incensed that as a national committeewoman I was in a position to play a rather prominent lead and a helpful lead to him.

There was a major campaign put on in this county with telephones and so on and so forth to defeat me, a major telephone campaign. But again, it was philosophically a combination of the John Birch Society and the ultra-right wing.

Stein: That's what I was going to ask.

Hitt: I think that most of the work in the telephoning was done by Birch members, because they had more time and would do it.

Stein: That's one thing that someone had told me to be sure to ask you about: they said that you had had a lot of trouble on the county committee with the Birch Society.

Hitt: Oh, [groans] I had a lot of trouble with the Birch Society, period. We were always on collision courses. I didn't agree with it, I didn't believe in it, I thought that it was destructive, I wished to God that they'd been Democrats instead of Republicans. We were often on different sides of the things. So yes, I had problems. I wasn't alone. Lots of other people who were not Birchers had problems.



Patricia Hitt with family in the office of California Representative James B. Utt, April 1960. From left to right: Congressman Utt, Mrs. Hitt, son John, Robert Hitt, son Rick.



Mrs. Hitt on her way to the Republican National Convention in Chicago, 1960, where she was elected Republican National Committeewoman.



Patricia Hitt admires Nixon campaign button on Mamie Eisenhower, 1968.

Hitt: The John Birch Society was very active and very, very prevalent in Orange County, not just on the county committee, but they were also at the school board elections. Oh boy! They were running their people and they were working. They were in it in this county from the bottom up. I did have problems. I had threatening mail. I had threatening telephone calls. I had an active opposition campaign running for county committee.

The more I bounced back, the more it infuriated them. You know, early on and before the sixties this thing had started. They thought they had me, maybe. They thought maybe they had taken care of me and then I bounce back and I'm national committeewoman and they go after that, and that's over, and then I come back and I co-chair the Murphy campaign, which almost killed them, because Murphy was a conservative, very much a conservative. That I was acceptable to him and that we were good friends who could work together, or that I could campaign for him, was a bitter pill.

##

Hitt: It was during the time that I was the national committeewoman. I was known to be a moderate. I was also known to be anti-John Birch, because while I never attacked directly in the press, if I was asked about it, I would always say, "I don't believe in them. I think their tactics are wrong. I think they're going at it the wrong way." But I always tried to differentiate--because I knew what the potential was, and we saw it happen later--between the John Birch Society members and conservatives, because all conservatives were not John Birchers by any manner or means.

For some reason or other, instinct told me that there was a potential danger there. We found out in the '62 campaign that there certainly was that potential. When Nixon finally, in the primary for the governorship in California, came out and made a strong statement, anti-John Birch Society, he lost a great deal of the conservative vote, not the John Birch members, but the conservative vote in this state, because they took it as attacking conservatives, which it wasn't. He was talking only about John Birchers. There were plenty of conservatives in his campaign.

[Joe] Shell and some of the ultraconservative people picked it up. Yes, I was the object of considerable hate. Nasty mail. I don't know that it was from John Birch members, but I can't imagine who else it would have been. The way it was phrased, the catch phrases and things. But after the first few, I really let it roll off.

It was the telephone calls that bothered me more than anything else. My husband--we finally went to the telephone company and asked if there wasn't some way that it could be monitored or something

Hitt: like that, late at night and all day long. So we finally put an unlisted phone in our house and gave that to our family and our children. Many times Bob would answer the phone, and if it wasn't somebody that could identify themselves to him satisfactorily as to who they were and what they wanted, he would just not give him the time of day.

I never was threatened physically or attacked or anything like that. You know, "We're going to shoot you," or some other thing like that. But I definitely was threatened, such as, "You'll rue this day." This kind of thing. As a matter of fact, I was also-- which really made no difference, because at that point, I was ready to resign. I didn't have the time to do it, couldn't do a good job. But I was defeated for the county central committee. I had been a member of the county Republican central committee for years, and in that campaign I had decided that being national committeewoman, I was not going to run again.

##

Hitt: It was a real major campaign the Birch Society put on. I didn't know it at the time, didn't know it until afterwards. Friends would say to me, "We had a call about you, Pat, saying that--" They were calling registered Republican voters around the county, not all of them, but evidently enough that inadvertently quite a few people that I knew were called. Then they called me later and said, "Well, we understand you're a Communist. We understand that you're a Socialist, that you're a pinko." You know, that kind of thing. They actively worked the precincts with that kind of slander, so people who didn't know who I was defeated me. It didn't mean anything, but it was one proof of what was going on.

##

Hitt: I hope I've outlived them. I don't know. I think they're an enormously destructive force. In my opinion, they're more destructive than the other extreme. Maybe it's because they're ours. The Birch Society is ours. The ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] and some of the others are the Democrats', so I feel more keenly about it [the Birch Society].

I personally feel that any extreme, any political extreme, is dangerous and destructive, whether it's the far right or the far left. I don't think that one's any better than the other.

I don't think we've had a demise. I know they're still going. They still have publications. They still have some membership. But they're not the force or the power that they once were. I think that the basic reason for it is that they finally turned off responsible conservatives. They finally got afraid and got turned off and left them.

Hitt: You know, I don't know what they are today, because I haven't had any contact with them. I haven't even heard anything about them in years.

I want to tell you, these people were wild! They were haters beyond anything I've ever seen in my life. I've never, never seen anything to equal the hate that they felt towards anyone who disagreed with them. It was an incredible thing. Well, that's how they kept alive. It was a philosophy of fear and of hatred. Either one of them was destructive. I saw people that they just tore apart. Their hatred just became all-consuming. You know, it was a self-destruct thing. God, I saw kids going without what I consider to be proper care and attention because parents were too busy in the "cause" to give them the time they should have had.

Now I'm taking it in the extreme. I'm not saying all John Birchers didn't take care of their kids. I don't mean it that way. But I did see kids left unfed, unsupervised, un-anything else because their mothers and fathers were too busy doing their John Birch stuff.

Committee Leaders

Stein: I have a list here of some of the Orange County central committee chairmen. I don't know if any of them need any comment. Dennis Carpenter?

Hitt: I know Denny, yes.

Stein: Was he part of the conservative end?

Hitt: No. He tried to be more moderate. He'd talk one thing to one group and one thing to another. I think maybe his basic instincts were more extreme, but he managed to keep them under some control. He was a fairly level--much better than the one they had later.

Stein: Who was that?

Hitt: George Delehanty. They finally defeated him a few years ago. He was really a wild-eyed man. But I didn't serve on his committee. I'll tell you somebody else, if you want to get into it, who would be a very, very good source for you on the county committee and the leadership and the directions it's taken in the last fifteen, twenty years: the Beavers, Bob and Dorothy Beaver. Bob has been a member of the state committee too.

- Hitt: I'm terribly sketchy on the county committee from '68 on, because I just wasn't here.
- Stein: Do the Beavers live--?
- Hitt: --In Fullerton. His office is in Los Angeles.
- Stein: C. Willard Key was president before Carpenter.
- Hitt: Yes, he passed away sometime before. He was a moderate. For the most part, the county leadership, as you go back, that's what it's going to be. Dennis Carpenter was the most conservative that we had up until his time.
- Stein: [Shows Mrs. Hitt a list of Orange County central committee chairmen.] Just looking at this list here,* I wonder if anyone else would have been there when you were there. Coalson Morris?
- Hitt: Yes. I served under Sam Barnes, Coalson Morris, Willard Key, and Dennis Carpenter. Wait, not Dennis Carpenter. No, I was not on the county committee. I was on the state committee with Dennis. There were some, I think, that came before Sam Barnes. Let's see. I can tell you how far back I go.
- Stein: This list starts with 1948.
- Hitt: I served under Barnes, Morris, Key, but not Carpenter. Oh, Lelia is listed here as Eastman. That was her maiden name. I'd forgotten. She was Baeskins when I knew her. Not her maiden name. It was her first husband, I think. I think Baeskins was her second. The one I refer to as Lelia Baeskins was Lelia Eastman. She was Eastman in the early days but Baeskins by the time I knew her.

*Chairman, Orange County Republican Central Committee

1948 - Mrs. Lelia Eastman	1960 - C. Willard Key
1954 - Robert Barnes	1962 - Dennis Carpenter
1956 - Robert Barnes	1964 - Dennis Carpenter
1958 - Coalson C. Morris	

III REPUBLICAN CONVENTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS

The 1946 Nixon Campaign and the Committee of One Hundred

Stein: Well, let's get started on some of the early campaigns, and we can continue them tomorrow. I guess that story starts in 1946.

Hitt: Yes. There really isn't much of an involvement other than as a precinct worker until we get to '56. In '46, I was a block worker. In '48 I was a block worker.

Stein: And that was pretty much on one little block?

Hitt: Just one block, because I still had little children. In '50, when Nixon ran for the U.S. Senate, we were living on Balboa Island at that time. I took on, I think, a fourth of the island, but not even a whole precinct, because I still had little kids. We're talking about door-to-door, so it was pretty much that in '50.

Then in '52, that's when I was in Orange and got into the running of the Orange headquarters for Nixon-Eisenhower. It wasn't precincting any more.

Stein: Let me back up to '46. My notes remind me that one of the clippings in your scrapbook referred to the fact that your father was one of ten or a dozen businessmen who had encouraged Nixon to run for office. Can you tell me that story?

Hitt: Well, this came before the Committee of One Hundred that's become more famous, that covered the whole congressional district.

Stein: Can you also tell me that story?

Hitt: A little, but not an awful lot. It became apparent that the Republicans needed a viable candidate in that congressional district. There were a group of people in Whittier that knew of Nixon. He'd

Hitt: gone to Whittier College and been a champion debater, then gone to Duke Law School, then into the navy. At that point, he was back just beginning to practice law in Whittier with Tom Bewley. It was Bewley and Nixon and I don't know who all else. [Law firm of Wingert and Bewley]

Bewley had been very active in civic kinds of things. Nixon never had been. I don't know who came up with the idea, whether it was Herman Perry or someone else. This was a group of ten or twelve of the old-timers, business people who would be willing to put their money where their mouth was and back somebody, and really were deeply concerned.

You know, the truth of the matter is, right now I can't even remember who was the--was it Voorhis, Jerry Voorhis?--incumbent.

Stein: Jerry Voorhis.

Hitt: By all reason, that should have been a Republican district. Anyway, a group of men got together and decided that if they could talk young Nixon into running for Congress, he'd be a good candidate and they would back him. So they did talk to him and he was interested in it. Then later, a so-called Committee of One Hundred--which never, I think, was a formalized group--picked up people from other parts of the district. After all, Whittier was only one small piece of that congressional district. They were people from Duarte and people from Alhambra--that was a huge congressional district at that time--who would be willing to support him and willing to head up the campaign and help raise funds and so on, if he were a candidate.

The Committee of One Hundred interviewed him and they decided that yes, they did think that this was the answer. What they had done was agreed that they would all get together and back one candidate instead of having three or four or five Republican candidates battling it out and nobody winning. The only chance of beating Voorhis was to come in with one strong candidate that everybody agreed to and go.

Stein: The story that I've read in a couple of places is that the committee either advertised or put an announcement in the local paper, calling for a--

Hitt: That's an old, old story, but I don't believe that that's accurate. I could ask my dad, but I don't think it is. I don't think they advertised. I don't think they ever went that far. I think they talked about it. I think it's a good story, and it's come about somehow, but I don't think it's true.

Stein: So in other words, they already knew about Nixon?

Hitt: A group of people in Whittier did know about him, and they and Nixon himself sold other leading Republicans in other parts of the district to begin with, Pomona and Claremont and Azusa and San Dimas and La Puente. It was a huge district at that time.

Stein: Was your father a member of the Committee of One Hundred?

Hitt: I don't know. I suppose that he was, because he was a member of the original group that was selling him and promoting it. As I said, the Committee of One Hundred is a term that's grown up. I don't know that it was ever a formally organized committee. I think it was a hundred people that agreed to endorse him from all over the congressional district, and that's probably all it was. I think the Committee of One Hundred was probably a name that was given to the group for campaign purposes.

Stein: So then you worked for Nixon that year?

Hitt: Right. That was '46.

The Nixon Senatorial Campaign, 1950

Stein: And then in '50, did you know much about the organization of that campaign?

Hitt: That was his Senate campaign. No.

Stein: Against Helen Gahagan Douglas.

Hitt: At that point, instead of one block, I was doing several. I followed it. I knew a little bit by that time. Some of the names were familiar--Murray Chotiner--some of the people, because I'd met them through other ways and other campaigns. But I was not involved in that campaign as a strategist or a decision-maker. I was just working a few blocks.

Stein: Who had been some of the other people that you'd met in some of these other campaigns?

Hitt: Well, Chotiner of course comes to mind immediately. Tom Bewley, I think, was involved in that campaign. There's a couple of much older men, if I can think of them. One of them died several years ago. Harrison McCall is the one I was trying to think of. He died several years ago. That was the first time I knew Harrison McCall. Then there's a fellow who was a printer in Pomona by the name of Roy Day. I think he's still alive, but I haven't seen him for years

Hitt: and years. I don't remember whether Ray Arbuthnot and Jack Drown were into it yet or not. I think they came on the scene in the presidential campaign, but I'm not certain.

Stein: I'm trying to think of any of the other names I've come across. Pat Hillings? He might have been later.

Hitt: Pat Hillings was later. Of course, Pat ran for the congressional seat that Dick [Nixon] left when he became the candidate for Senate. But I don't know that Pat was involved in that Senate campaign. He might have been. I was on such a local level that I just wasn't involved in it.

Stein: There have been so many stories about that campaign, especially with all the literature in the last few years about Nixon.

Hitt: I don't really think that was a dirty campaign. As I recall, what you'd consider dirty--I really believe that that Helen Gahagan Douglas incident has been blown all out of proportion. At the time, we didn't particularly think so. At the time, even Voorhis, whom he'd defeated--and I don't know that Douglas herself--thought it was all that dirty. She was very controversial.

As far as the tie-in between Douglas and Vito Marcantonio: now Marcantonio was regarded throughout the United States as being, if not Communist, leaning that way in his voting record. If you want to know the truth, I never have considered that comparing Helen Gahagan Douglas's voting record with Vito Marcantonio's was dirty politics. It's there. If it had been different, it would have compared with Leverett Saltonstall maybe, or somebody else.

I think a politician elected to public office has to expect to stand on his voting record. If that voting record duplicates somebody else's, you're probably going to fall into that philosophical category, whether it's fair or not.

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Hitt: I think a great deal of it has been exaggerated by the media and the writers. I think part of it was that they were a little incensed at him taking on a woman, which, let's face it, cuts both ways. I think that was part of it. She was a celebrity. She was a woman. I think that a lot of people in that day believed that a woman had to be handled with kid gloves. You don't treat them like you do a man. If it'd been a man, there wouldn't have been all this furor. If it had been, instead of Helen Gahagan Douglas, Everett Gahagan Douglas or something, there wouldn't have been all of this.

Hitt: It was pretty much politics the way it was practiced in those days, as far as I know. As I've said, for all I've read and experienced, I really never have been able to figure out exactly why it caused such a furor, because he [Nixon] did compare it [Mrs. Douglas's voting record to Marcantonio's]. All right, so it was printed on pink paper. So what? It could have been on yellow, it would have been worse. Or green or white or whatever.

I really do not believe that it was intended. I've known Murray Chotiner for many, many years. Murray had lots of faults and lots of assets. I had enormous respect and admiration for Murray in many ways. I didn't always agree. He was very tough. But I would have to say that of all the people in politics I've ever known in my life, I think Murray was the most brilliant politician that I've ever known. It wasn't always kid gloves. Sometimes it was bare knuckles. But I really don't believe that that was ever intended to be anything but accurate. I know it's been charged that it was a deliberate falsehood, that they deliberately falsified, deliberately made charges. I don't think that's true.

I think that probably an objective look at the whole thing, if it ever comes, would show that for the most part, the voting record comparison was fair, and it wasn't a dreamed-up thing, but it was very emotional. As I said, if it had been a man, I don't think there would have been a case.

Stein: There are a couple of other stories too; that election is filled with legends, at this point. There's also a story about telephone calls. There was some sort of promise that if you answered the phone "Vote for Nixon," that you'd get a prize of some kind. Do you remember that?

Hitt: Oh, that's inconceivable. In the first place, they didn't have enough money in that campaign to buy prizes. I don't know. I'm trying to think who--you really should talk to somebody that was involved in that campaign, if you really want to know, who would be perfectly honest and candid with you. I don't know who to refer you to. Tom Bewley, an attorney in Whittier, would probably be the best one that I know of. Tom would be absolutely honest and candid with you, if there's any purpose in going into it. I don't know about the telephone calls. I'd never heard it before, but that was a shoestring campaign if there ever was one. I don't know where they found the money to buy anything.

And say, by some stretch of the imagination, it was true. Is that so bad? That doesn't necessarily say what voters are going to do when they get in the polls. I don't know. Somehow that just doesn't get me all uptight. If that were the case, all in God's

Hitt: world they could be doing is to fool themselves, if they thought they were running a poll on it. Who would you be kidding? It would be pretty foolish. Murray Chotiner was smarter than that. He would know immediately. As I said, who are you kidding?

Stein: I think we ought to call it a day with the '50 election and start in tomorrow with '52, if that's okay with you.

Hitt: Sure.

The Eisenhower-Nixon Ticket, 1952

The Nixon Fund and its Aftermath

Stein: I think we left off yesterday with the election of 1952. That was the year that you went into Gordon Richmond's office and volunteered your services half-time. Did you know much at all about the behind-the-scenes thing in that election, such as the [Thomas] Werdel delegation?

Hitt: No, I really didn't, because my responsibility was the headquarters of the town of Orange, which at that time was about eight or nine, ten thousand people, and the perimeter, which was somewhat larger than that. I was not involved in any way except managing that headquarters, getting the precinct work done and the literature out and that kind of thing. So I wasn't on the inside of anything that went on.

Stein: Did you hear any stories about what happened on the campaign train to Chicago?

Hitt: The campaign train to Chicago?

Stein: Yes. Most of the delegates went together. Actually it was just a series of cars that had been tacked on--

Hitt: Oh, for the convention.

Stein: Yes.

Hitt: No. The reason I ask you is because I did know quite a bit about the famous train trip when Nixon was on the road and waiting to find out whether Eisenhower was going to keep him on the ticket or not. That I knew from personal experience.

Stein: Maybe we should just skip ahead to that part of the story.

Hitt: Well, that's the time if you remember, of the famous Checkers speech. Nixon made that speech, and interestingly enough, I'm sure that my father wasn't the only one that suggested that he do it, but my father was one of the ones that urged him to do it. When this all happened, he said, "Dick, I think you should go on television and tell the whole story to the American public and just lay it out, and then leave it to Eisenhower and the public to decide."

As I said, I'm sure he wasn't the only one. I'm sure there were many others that thought of the same thing. So anyway, he did. Nixon was in the middle of the campaign by that time, on the train, not airplane. Then if you remember, I think history says that there were two, three or four days there--several days--before Eisenhower responded. I think there was some back-and-forth communication between Eisenhower aides and Nixon aides, a few conversations, but not much, before Eisenhower made any response at all.

Well, this was an unbelievably traumatic experience for both Pat and Dick Nixon because they didn't know. You know, here they were hanging in the balance and didn't know anything. Nixon refers to it and calls my dad by name, along with Tom Bewley, in Six Crises.* He refers to Johnny Reilly and Tom Bewley.

Anyway, when Nixon reached Portland--I don't remember, Mimi, whether this was two days or three days or four days--but by the time the train reached Portland, the morale aboard that train was just zero. Rose [Rose Mary Woods, Nixon's personal secretary] has told me about it, from the standpoint of those on board.

So my dad called Tom Bewley one morning. He said, "I think we'd better get up there. Let's get on an airplane and go to Portland. If we can't tell him anything else, tell him the people in Whittier are his friends and they're behind him, and give him what kind of encouragement we can." Nobody knew they were coming, and all of a sudden they step on that train. This I heard from Dad, but I've also heard from Rose, from the standpoint of people there. She said it was just an absolutely incredible thing.

*Richard Nixon, Six Crises (New York, 1962), pp. 73-129, especially p. 98.

Hitt: She and some of the staff people hadn't eaten, hardly, for a couple of days or so, just because they were too upset, there was too much going on. The first thing my dad did--they arrived in late afternoon or early evening--he walked in and said, "Okay, Rose and all the rest of you. When did you eat last?" You know, it had been the typical kind of thing: they really hadn't thought all that much about eating. He said, "Okay, forget it," and he went downtown in Portland someplace and found some place where they would send a whole bunch of steak dinners out, and got the hot food out there.

It wasn't that they were starving to death or anything, but it was "When did you eat last? By God, you've got to keep up your strength," and then having thirty or forty steak dinners sent in. It was the kind of thing that really did make a difference. As I remember, it wasn't too long, twenty-four hours or something like that, before he did hear from Eisenhower (or one of his aides, anyway) and did get the word.

Rose said that arrival of those two men with the encouragement just simply turned the whole atmosphere around on that campaign train. So I know about that.

I knew that because my dad was involved, not because I was on the inside of the campaign. I can remember Dad, when he came home afterwards, saying that he never in his whole life had he seen a group of people so just laid out, laid low. I remember he said, "I've never seen anything like it in my life. No spirit, no morale or anything. Dick tried to get charged up to go talk to the group off the back of the train. My God, you'd've thought it was a funeral or worse."

Stein: Did you know much about the original fund that led to the whole problem in the first place?

Hitt: Not much. Just a little, because I heard my dad discuss it. Now it happened that he wasn't a contributor to that fund, for no particular reason. He had done other things, and it's his way to do something else. But I do know that originally that fund was set up with the best intentions in the world, both on the part of those who contributed to it, and on the part of the Nixons. Their funds were extremely meager. The Nixon family was not a family of wealth. I mean, they were a poor family, to some extent. They were hard-working, and of course he was just out of school and out of the navy. A lieutenant in the navy in those days didn't make much. Pat had worked all the time. He came back and just started with a law firm.

All of this is going back a ways. But in those days a congressman's pay wasn't that great, nor were the allowances that great. He had no individual funds whatsoever, so that when he was

Hitt: elected and went back there [to Washington, D.C.], there was a general feeling and an agreement among all of the people that had been involved in his campaign as to how little they had. For example, the people in Whittier all went in and bought him a car, an Oldsmobile, to drive back in because they had this beat-up, battered old station wagon. They actually doubted if it would make it to Washington, but the Nixons had no means of purchasing a replacement.

That was in the days of--this is a little bit of a different, a human kind of a thing--in the days when hand-knit suits and dresses were very big. Women were doing an awful lot of it. I remember doing it myself. They were a very big thing, these beautiful hand-knit things.

So there were quite a few women in Whittier, including my mother, who did a lot of hand-knit dresses and suits. They all got together and pooled and they did three or four hand-knit dresses for Pat. Somebody would do the top of one, to get it done in a hurry, and somebody else would do the skirt. They were in a heavy kind of a bouclé yarn, so the difference in the stitches wouldn't show.

But these were the kinds of things that were done. The people in town, as I say, bought them the first new automobile they'd ever had in their lives. The women got together and they really had Pat outfitted. It wasn't a charity thing. It was a friends' kind of thing.

Stein: Sort of like a barn-raising.

Hitt: Yes, very much. That's a small town, a Quaker town in the old days. It was like that, and everybody had a part of it. The people that were involved in the campaign felt--and this was a new concept--that it really was awfully important that Nixon stay in contact with people at home, and that he let them know what was going on in Washington. But they didn't think that it was right for him to use franking privileges, because it would have been a slightly different form of communication than just a congressional newsletter. He couldn't afford the postage, and that's really all that fund was ever for, postage and a little bit of travel. To give the Nixons an opportunity to make a trip home that they couldn't afford, if they wanted to, and not charge it to government expense in his allotment, which wasn't all that great in those days.

So that's all in the world that it was begun for, not for their personal use. People wanted him to come back as often as possible to meet with them. They wanted the contact. They wanted to hear from him. As far as I know, that's all it was ever used for. I'm

Hitt: sure that that's all, because it wasn't all that much money, but it's probably the first time that something like that had happened, or at least that had been publicized. Then all of a sudden it was made to look like he was being subsidized by private interests. It wasn't true. A lot of the contributions were dollar and five dollar contributions.

As I remember--I could be wrong--I think there was a limitation even on it. I don't think he would take more than fifty or a hundred dollars per contributor. So it wasn't an influence. They weren't buying a congressman. But of course, it could sound like that, but it was started in all sincerity. Like you say, like a barn-raising thing. It never meant to be anything more than that by anybody. That's the last time anybody ever did that! [Laughter] They realized what the implications could be.

Some Campaign Leaders in California

Stein: Who were the other people that you worked with in the campaign itself?

Hitt: In '52?

Stein: In '52, yes. Do any of them deserve special mention?

Hitt: Frankly, I remember Gordon Richmond and Lelia Baeskins. I would say that those were the two primary ones. Most workers were coming in as volunteers and there were dozens and dozens of them. What I tried to do (and was successful) was find people who would volunteer to give one half-day a week, a certain half day, because I was managing the headquarters, but needed lots of help in the usual campaign jobs that volunteers do in a headquarters. I tried to get people, a nucleus, who would give a specific period of time, on a regular schedule every week, so that there was a permanent staff that got to know each other.

The rest were just volunteers that came in and worked at odd hours. There were hundreds of individual women--[telephone interruption] a steady stream of people in and out. Gordon and Lelia were the contact or the liaison with the county. I'm certain Gordon was on the county committee. I think Lelia still was at that time, but I wasn't. I just carried out whatever campaign policy was established for the county.

Stein: Were most of the volunteers you had women?

Hitt: Yes. All women. I don't remember any men. In later campaigns, I have had men volunteers, older retired men and just men. But in those days it was all women.

Stein: Is there anything else we need to say about '52?

Hitt: I don't really think so, because that was, as I said, when I took on more responsibility than just a block or a precinct, but was not yet involved in campaign strategies or the inner councils or the party.

Stein: By this time, were you on the state central committee? We determined these dates yesterday.

Hitt: Not by '52.

Stein: Not by '54 either, or were you in '54?

Hitt: I think maybe it was after--it was either '54 or '56.

Stein: Well, at any rate, my next question is about 1954. There was something of a controversy in the Republican State Central Committee over the vice-chairmanship that year.

Hitt: There often is, because in the Republican party, the vice-chairman automatically becomes the chairman, and generally, if there is a fight within the party it's on that second spot, not the first spot. If you tell me who they were, then I'll know whether I was or wasn't on the committee.

Stein: It was Howard Ahmanson and Ray Arbuthnot. Howard Ahmanson was being backed by [Goodwin] Knight, and Ray Arbuthnot was being backed by Nixon.

Hitt: I do remember the controversy, but I don't remember whether I was on the committee or not at that time. But yes, I do, but only very vaguely do I remember. When you mention the two names, yes. So my guess is that I was not, at that point, serving on the state committee, or I would probably remember. Or I was a brand new appointee and didn't know what was going on.

Stein: One of the things that interests me about that whole controversy is that this is right after Earl Warren had left the state to go to the Supreme Court. It left the Republican party, as far as I can tell, in the hands of a triumvirate, with Knight, [William] Knowland and Nixon as the major forces in the party.

Hitt: Right.

Stein: It seemed to me that this '54 struggle over the vice-chairmanship was a little bit of jockeying for power among those three.

Hitt: It probably was. I would guess that it was. I don't know, but I would be very, very surprised if that wasn't the opening battle of the war between the three; you know, each trying to establish beach heads, so to speak.

You see, whoever was elected vice-chairman in '54 would be chairman in '56, the presidential year, so that it was very important to each one of the three involved if possible to have his man. Nobody knew what was going to come up in '56, who'd be the candidates. At that point, there was still some of the residue of the Taft-Eisenhower factions from '52, so that it would be important for each one of those three to have his man as a spokesman for the party at that time. You didn't know whether Taft was going to surface again, whether it would be Eisenhower, or what was going to happen.

That's why those contests in the Republican party in the two-year periods between presidential elections are always very important, and they're almost always very hot and heavy, because on the vice-chairman's level, what you're doing is ipso facto electing the state chairman for the presidential campaign year, when the delegates are picked.

Stein: The ironic thing about that whole controversy was that Ahmanson won in '54 and then proceeded to have a heart attack before '56, so that he did not become chairman.

Hitt: Obviously I was either a brand new member and didn't know what was going on, or I was not a member of the state committee at that time because I don't remember that.

The Big Switch, 1958

Stein: Were you at all involved in the '54 campaign? That was of governor and lieutenant governor. That's when Knight ran for office on his own.

Hitt: No. My first involvement on a statewide campaign was in '58 for Knowland. I was involved in the Knowland campaign for governor here in Orange County and throughout Southern California, and with Gladys O'Donnell was deeply involved. By that time, she was (I believe) state president [of the federation], or on her way to be there. I was [involved], even though I did not approve, and even though my own choice would have been for Knight to stay where he was and Knowland.

Hitt: stay where he was. I wasn't particularly happy about it, but let's face it, Knowland was the Republican candidate, so I was involved. I was out on the road campaigning a great deal.

That was the first time that I, you might say, went statewide. Before that, everything had been primarily here in the county with a peripheral involvement in state politics through federation activities, but not campaigns.

Stein: When you were going around for Knowland, what were you doing?

Hitt: One of the things I was doing was with Gladys, as state women's chairman for Knowland, who had put together this safari, she called it. She had Helen Knowland and the two daughters and the daughter-in-law who all took a month or six weeks, and literally covered the state on a bus.

Stein: Oh yes, that was the trailer, "Trailing for Knowland," or something like that.

Hitt: "Rolling for Knowland," I think.

Stein: "Rolling with Knowland."

Hitt: "Rolling with Knowland," but she called it a safari. They stayed in motels or hotels at night, but in the daytime, they were on that chartered bus. They absolutely whistle-stopped this state on that bus, picking up local women, as they'd move into a county, who went with it. I'd say that I probably did about half the tour with Gladys to help her.

That was quite an experience. They were good sports, Helen and the girls. The daughter-in-law was everybody's favorite. But ye gods, did they need a lot of waiting on!

Within two or three days, Gladys could see what she was up against. I think Dorothy Goodknight was with her all the time, too. But they could see what the problems were. Here were a group of women, with the exception of the daughter-in-law, who had been waited on all their lives. I don't know how many years it'd been since Helen Knowland had washed out a pair of her own hose.

It became obvious in the first few days that somebody was going to have to take on that kind of thing for them, and Gladys just couldn't handle all of those personal things in addition to the campaign and coordinate the stops and events. So I did travel with her and took some of the load of both kinds off her, because we were campaigners and handmaidens.

Stein: There's been quite a bit written about that campaign, and some of it of a critical nature. I guess primarily some people were upset by the things that Helen Knowland said about Knight.

Hitt: Yes, she was a little too blunt. Sometimes Helen would get involved. It was a bitter campaign between the two. Obviously it couldn't be anything else, when to all intents and purposes Bill Knowland had pushed Goody Knight out of the running for the job that he really wanted. Goody Knight had less interest than I would in being United States Senator, really. But it was a power kind of thing, and he had no choice.

It did get pretty bitter behind the scenes also. I'm sure that some very unkind things were said about Bill, probably more about him than anything else, because he was the target. I mean, he was the one that had caused all of this. There was a lot of bitterness and a lot of criticism. Helen would hear it or read it and she reacted violently to it.

When Helen was on her best behavior and thinking about it, she was very tactful. But when you caught her off guard, no. It was kind of like a facade. So yes, she did. There were times when I saw her--not just on that trip, but through the campaign--being awfully rude to people, and I cringed.

Stein: There was one episode where she distributed a pamphlet by Joseph Kamp--

Hitt: Yes, I know Joe Kamp.

Stein--who was with the Constitutional Education League.* There was quite a bit of criticism about that, too, because it was a fairly right-wing pamphlet of some kind. I'm not familiar with it myself.

Hitt: Probably, because there was a tendency to try to push Knight into the extreme left of the party, as there has been with Rockefeller through the years, the same kind of thing. I think it's entirely possible. I don't know, but it doesn't sound unreasonable.

It was a bitter campaign, not just the campaign but the actions, everything about it--it left wounds within the Republican party for years and years and years. As I said to you yesterday, I really

*Mrs. Knowland distributed five hundred copies of the Kamp pamphlet entitled, "Meet the Man Who Plans to Rule America." Kamp himself had long been identified with right-wing causes. See Totton J. Anderson, "The 1958 Election in California," Western Political Quarterly, March, 1959, p. 293.

Hitt: think that the beginning of the downfall of the Republican party in California from a position of almost total dominance, even though the registration wasn't that way, began with Bill Knowland. I think he was the architect of many defeats that the Republican party suffered later. Perhaps architect isn't the right word, because he didn't plan those defeats, but they came as a result of the '58 campaign and his whole action.

Stein: Do you know what Nixon's attitude was about that whole thing?

Hitt: No, I really don't, of my own. Whatever I'd say would be something I might have read at some time or another, because I wasn't particularly involved, except that I know that he was extremely upset about the party fight it had caused, and wary of it and concerned about it.

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Hitt: I don't know what his [Nixon's] involvement in it was. I don't know what role he played behind the scenes in any way.

Stein: Do you have any ideas, since you do know him personally, if that's something he would be willing to be interviewed about?

Hitt: I don't think so. I don't think he'd be willing to be interviewed about anything at this point, really. No, I don't think that he would, but I think your best source, the best potential source there again, would be Bob Finch. Lots of others were involved in it and knew about it, but he has a more retentive memory. The reason I say that your best source would be he, is because he would be more apt to retain, to remember. I don't think that the Nixons, either one of them, would be available for interviews on any subject at this point. He dealt with it in his book Six Crises to the extent that I think he probably ever cares to or wants to.

Stein: One of the other things that we came across was the fact that Ed Shattuck, who had been Knowland's campaign manager, resigned in June. Do you remember that?

Hitt: No, I don't. Ed Shattuck became national committeeman, or was he? I guess Ed was national commiteeman at that time.

Stein: He was.

Hitt: You mean resigned as campaign manager or resigned as national committeeman?

Stein: He must have resigned already as national committeeman. He had been Knowland's--

Hitt: Well, he was national committeeman when I became national committee-woman. I think he was national committeeman until '60. I think he and Marjorie [Benedict] represented California. I know I replaced Marjorie, and I think Joe Martin replaced Ed Shattuck.

Stein: Ed Shattuck was committeeman from '56 to '60, and Joe Martin replaced him.

Hitt: Right. Joe and I came on the national committee together, at the same time. So why Ed resigned the campaign job I don't remember. I probably knew at the time why, but I just don't remember that. I'm sure I knew at the time why, but that's been so long ago I've forgotten.

Stein: Let's back up a second to '56, which we skipped over. That was the presidential year. You were involved in that?

Hitt: Yes, with Bob Farrell from Garden Grove--I haven't seen him since, or for years. I don't even know if he's alive. He probably is, because he was reasonably young at that time. He and I were the county co-chairmen for the Eisenhower-Nixon campaign. He was in real estate development in Garden Grove, and really had not done a great deal politically before that that I knew of, and never did very much afterwards. It was one of those things where he came in briefly on that campaign and then never, insofar as I know; played a major role again. But the two of us did have the responsibility for the entire Orange County campaign for Eisenhower and Nixon.

Stein: And what did that mean that you did?

Hitt: Well, like it usually does in anything, and I mean this as no criticism of Bob Farrell or anybody else. It was just like it usually is. The woman co-chairman was the one that ended up doing the work and the coordinating. The man was the spokesman and acted primarily in fund raising. It was my responsibility to get the precinct organization set up in Orange County, to get the headquarters opened in the various cities where we felt that they should have them, to get the city committees to scrounge for empty buildings that they could use for free.

I would go to Los Angeles about once a week for strategy meetings for all of Southern California, and to beg and plead for our share, or more than our share, of the campaign materials, whatever it was. But no, my responsibility was the mechanics of what it took to set up a full-scale presidential campaign in Orange County.

Some Observations About Being a Woman in Politics

Responsibilities in Politics

Stein: When you say that you went to strategy meetings, were you as a woman participating as an equal with everyone else there?

Hitt: Yes. Interestingly enough, I have never participated as anything less than a total equal, in any campaign I've ever worked in. I said, as is usually the case, I ended up doing the nitty-gritty and the work, but I also had an equal voice in any decisions or any conferences, anything.

I know that there's much been said about it, and much feeling that women got the hard work but never got the voice. In my own particular experience, this was never true. I had just as much voice as any man on a corresponding level. Now I didn't have as much influence or voice in that campaign as the state chairman of the campaign had, but I had as much as anybody else on that same level. That was always true, in every campaign.

Stein: One of the things that's sometimes said is that the reason that women don't have more of a voice is that many of the meetings where the real decisions are made take place at times when women can't be there, like at night when they should be with their families, or whatever.

Hitt: Well, perhaps that's one of the reasons I had an equal voice--I don't know. I could be there; no matter what time the meetings were, I could be there, and I was, because I had first and foremost a very supportive husband. If it hadn't been for Bob Hitt's attitude, and a very supportive family, the boys, I could never have done any of these things. Nobody ever squawked if they got a TV dinner. They went right ahead with it, whatever it may be. I had total and complete support from my husband and the boys in any of those activities.

However, I didn't bite off things that were going to disturb them too much until the boys had reached an age where they could fend for themselves, so to speak.

Stein: At this point, in the late fifties, they would still have been in high school, both of them.

Hitt: Yes, but by the time they're in high school, they can pretty much take care of themselves. So no. Any time I needed to be gone on a trip or gone overnight or anything, there was never any quibble.

Hitt: I also had the very, very real and tangible and necessary financial support from my mother and father, because [Bob and I] were not in a position where we could finance the kind of activity that was required, particularly when I became national committeewoman. Really, up until then it wasn't necessary. When I became national committeewoman, if I was going to do the job, I was going to do it right and I was going to do it the way I thought best. There was no financial support from the state committee or anybody else for the national committee members. My father and mother picked up the tab. In those days, it ran in the neighborhood of ten thousand dollars a year. That was a lot of money in those days. It paid for my travel, for a full-time secretary that I needed, for the bulletins I got out, all the things that I did that had never been done before, from a national committee level.

Stein: What sorts of things were these that you innovated?

Hitt: Well, one thing I innovated was a monthly newsletter. As national committeewoman, I received a lot of party publications that were not generally distributed: congressional newsletters, I got everybody's congressional newsletter. I got the national congressional newsletter that was primarily for congressmen and national party people, and the Senate memo and a lot of publications like that.

I had a wealth of Republican information or propaganda or however you want to term it, as the national committeewoman, that other people didn't get. So once a month I took all that and digested it and picked out those things that I thought might be most useful for campaigners or Republican women in their organizations or clubs: pieces from speeches, information; it could range from precise data to some funny quip that somebody could use.

At my own expense, I mimeographed those and sent them out. I don't remember exactly how many I sent, but I would guess probably somewhere in the neighborhood of a thousand or twelve hundred a month, to all the federation club presidents, the state board members, independent organizations, anybody that wanted to be on the mailing list, or that I thought should have it, so that they would have that information.

Stein: Did you also send it to the party groups, the central committees?

Hitt: Yes. It was just a newsletter, but it was a means of passing on information, comments, party stands, information on legislation, whatever it may be to a lot of other people.

I also did a great deal of traveling and a great deal of campaigning. I was probably on the road at least a third of the time each year, not just a campaign year. Traveling, I campaigned

Hitt: for other than presidential candidates and I campaigned for candidates all over. If I'd go into any district to make a speech or to be there for anything, I would campaign for the local assembly candidate or the congressman or state senator or constitutional office candidate.

Stein: Just for the record, and also to clear up my own confusion, that would always be after the primary?

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: Could you in your position get involved before primaries?

Hitt: I could have, but I didn't, because I thought that it would be divisive. The party's not supposed to [make preprimary endorsements]; the federation presidents were not supposed to. Yes, I was a free agent as a national committee member. I could have, but I didn't, or certainly not publicly, because I felt that it would be divisive within the organization. [Tape off briefly]

Hitt: I did a lot of radio, TV interviews whenever I was traveling as national committeewoman, a great deal of that. In a town like--well, let's take Eureka for example. The local congressman or the local state legislator couldn't really command--they were all so used to him--he didn't command as much attention as a visiting dignitary from the national party level. When I went into a town, there was no problem. They always wanted a press conference. I could always get on the local radio and TV stations for interviews. I'd do a great deal of that. We would try for it, because they would take me where they wouldn't take the local officeholders, because I was somebody new and on a national level.

Of course, all of that travel and hotels, transportation and everything like that: there was nobody to pick it up, so it was a personal expense. Then the Washington conferences that the national committee held every year in Washington, that was my responsibility: to get out the notices, to see that everybody got them, to take in the reservations, to tell them how to get there, to see that we had a block of rooms at a hotel for however many--it would range from eighty to a hundred and forty or fifty women--and plan their schedule, and maintain a suite. At those conferences, I always took a suite for myself because there was a large living room where the women could meet and get together and socialize or where we would have briefing sessions or meetings.

It was also my feeling that since so many of these women had traveled so far to the conference--and some had never been to Washington before--that we should take advantage of their trip back there and do some side trips. So I always planned and set up and

Hitt: organized and made available a side trip, whether it was to Williamsburg or to Mount Vernon and wherever it was, one day that was part of the conference. That was an enormous logistics job.

I worked for weeks and weeks ahead of time and during the conferences. That was not different [from what other national committeewomen did]. Marjorie Benedict had done the same thing. I elaborated a little on it, did a little more, but she had set the general format up. She always set up a meeting with all of the California Republican delegation in Congress and gave us a half a day where we could meet with them and talk to them and ask questions and be brought up to date. I continued this practice.

At the same time, I was traveling with this school of politics for the federation and doing a lot of federation speaking. A lot of that travel was speaking at Federated clubs where they needed or wanted somebody. It was very, very active.

I've had national committee staff people that had been there for many, many, many years and still are, tell me that I was probably the most active national committeewoman in the history of the party, as far as doing things. But this goes back to the fact that my mother and father financed me to a great extent. I couldn't have done it otherwise. I was able to do this kind of thing that probably anybody else would have done if they'd had the time and had the finances to do it. That was because I had the time. My family gave me the time. My husband and the boys gave me the time and my father and mother gave me the financial aid.

Stein: You couldn't have had a more winning combination there.

Hitt: No.

Stein: Speaking of your family, did your husband and sons get at all involved themselves in the work you were doing?

Hitt: Not really. I remember when they first started organizing teenage Republicans; you know, the high school age Republicans. Oftentimes they were sponsored by federation clubs. I can remember talking to the boys about it. Both of them said, "Mother, we get enough of it at home. We don't need any more." [Laughter] So no, they weren't. They were interested, they were supportive as long as Mother didn't ask them to join, but they were so saturated. They got so much of it at home that they really didn't need it in their spare time.

Stein: How about in campaigns? Did they distribute literature?

Hitt: Oh yes, they would a little bit if I asked them to, or come down and help me at headquarters. But no, they never did get really involved. Neither did Bob. He used to say, "One politician in the

Hitt: family is enough." [Laughter] They were interested and they were supportive, but they did not personally participate, other than what they did to help me.

Stein: Let me just ask you one other question related to that at this point. Did you yourself ever consider ever running for public office?

Hitt: Not really. Of course, naturally, it came up every two years, practically, I would say from '56 on. Every two years somebody would say, "Why don't you?" and there was a great deal of urging, particularly from women, the federation people. There was always constant talk. "Pat, why don't you run for office? Why don't you run for Congress? Why don't you run for Senate? Why don't you run for office?" But I never wanted to.

Stein: Why not?

Hitt: I know from what people have told me, and from results, that I'm a very effective campaigner for other people. I could not be an effective campaigner for myself. I simply could not stand up in front of an audience and say, "Vote for me because I'll do a better job. I can do a better job." While you don't say it in those words, this is what it's all about. I couldn't do it. I just couldn't. I can beat the brush and I can charge and I can get up and I can rally the troops for somebody else, but I couldn't do it for myself.

Plus the fact-- Of course, if I had run for office, it would have necessitated moving either to Sacramento or to Washington. When the boys were younger, in the early days, there was no way I would have done it. I didn't want to live there. I wouldn't have moved my family. It probably would have been difficult for us. I don't know what Bob would have done.

When it reached the point where the boys were gone and we were mobile, it wouldn't have been as difficult to move. By that time, I'd been involved enough in it to see the congressmen's mail and to know what went on. I've said many times there is no way on earth that I want to be answerable to and the personal property of a quarter of a million people or a hundred thousand people. I just don't want it. There's a lot of abuse. Many people tend to think they own you. You're their congressman. They're paying your salary. You ought to do it their way.

So I never did. The last time the subject ever came up was the senatorial race in '74.

Stein: Fairly recently.

Hitt: Yes. At that point, there was an enormous amount of urging and pressure on me from the national Republican senatorial campaign, from the national committee, from my own staff at HEW [U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare]. None of them were Californians, but [they] would have all come out and beat their brains out. There was more pressure then on me from more different ways to make a race than ever before. "There's just no way," I said. "There's just no way."

I wouldn't run in '74 for a number of reasons. I'm not good at fundraising. I hate fundraising! That's the one thing I would never get into. I loathe it. I don't like to ask people for money and contributions. And that would have been a difficult race. Alan Cranston is virtually unbeatable. Let's be practical. While I don't mind being a sacrificial lamb [laughter], I do mind what would have happened. I would have had to dig into personal finances probably in a six-figure amount to make a hopeless run. No way! If I did that, then something else had to give, the kids or someone.

By that time too, I was tired. I didn't want to work any longer. I really had worked terribly, terribly hard and very long hours at HEW for a variety of reasons. I just wasn't interested. But I think that it is interesting that after all that time, the greatest pressure came at that point. But no, I never even considered it or gave it two thoughts.

Women as Fundraisers

Stein: It's interesting what you said about the fundraising. There's been a series of evening workshops up in San Francisco sponsored by the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women on women in politics. One of the sessions was on fundraising. One of the interesting points they made was that it seems to be a fairly universal problem among women running for public office that they can't stand to raise funds.

In fact, one woman had done a study of it and had asked a number of woman candidates, people like Dianne Feinstein and most of the Northern California women who've been successful in public office. Some of them even compared it to prostitution. They said they felt like it was the most degrading, humiliating thing that they could think of doing.

Hitt: Now I would differentiate between small fundraising and major fundraising. Small fundraising I love, because that's where you come up with a gimmick. You're after the dollar. You're not making

Hitt: an appointment and asking somebody to contribute a large sum of money. You come up with some kind of a gimmick, which we did lots of in the '68 presidential campaign, and we were very successful in the small fundraising. That I enjoyed, that I loved, because it's a totally different kind of thing.

It's the major fundraising; I just don't think that women like it. By and large, they're not very successful. To be a good major fundraiser--and I only know of two women in the state of California who are. They both are Southern Californians, but they are only two that I would say through the years have been excellent major fundraisers.

Stein: Who are they?

Hitt: Athalie Clarke, Mrs. Thurmond Clarke, and Margaret Martin Brock. They are superb, and they raise an awful lot of money. But to be a good fundraiser, major fundraiser, you have to have substantial wealth yourself, because if you're going to go in and ask somebody for a five thousand dollar contribution (in the days when you could), then by golly--and sometimes you're asking women, but generally you're asking men, businessmen--you've got to match that yourself. If you're going to ask somebody to give five thousand dollars, you have to have already given that five thousand dollars to that candidate, or ten thousand or whatever it would be.

That means that you have to have substance to give. The other thing you have to do: you have to do an awful lot of giving, and an awful lot of hundred and five hundred and thousand dollar ticket buying for other people's candidates or causes because you have to build an equity. Now Athalie Clarke or Margaret Martin Brock--I'm sure that in the last twenty years, there hasn't been a single fundraising dinner given for anything or anybody in a major campaign that they haven't bought at least a ticket and maybe a table.

So then when they come back to ask people to raise money for their campaigns, they have an equity. They say, "All right, I did yours," or people remember. They can't turn them down because they in turn didn't turn somebody else down. This is what it takes; either that or it takes the kind of a business position or business success where you can sit down with somebody, some businessman, usually. You raise money differently with women, and from women. Unless they have a very personal feeling, by and large women do not give large sums of money in campaigns. Those that do give it for a personal reason or a philosophy. I'm thinking now of a Blanche Seaver.

Stein: Who?

Hitt: A Blanche Seaver. She does contribute, but she contributes only to very conservative candidates and campaigns and causes or to an individual. Even those men who can go to their business associates on an equal level, corporation board members, heads of large companies and conglomerates, they have to have matched what they're asking somebody for before they do it.

But small fundraising is a totally different thing. It's fun. I love it. I always have. Through the years, most of what I used in the '68 campaign by the way of small fundraising were things that I'd dreamed up and had already done here in California or heard somebody else do or gotten word of or something. I was always on the lookout.

Stein: I'm going to wait until we get to those campaigns to ask you about those, because I came across a number of references to them in the clippings.

Hitt: I can tell you one that was not successful and why. It was a great idea, but it was a loser and I can tell you why, when we get to it.

Stein: Which campaign was that in?

Hitt: In '68, for Nixon-Agnew.

1960: Nixon versus Kennedy

Becoming National Committeewoman

Stein: Let me back up to a little bit of ancient history again. On the '56 campaign, did you go to the convention that year?

Hitt: No. I was a delegate and went to my first convention as a delegate in 1960.

Stein: In '60.

Hitt: And then I went as the national committeewoman, or the national committeewoman-elect and a member of the Nixon delegation.

Stein: In '56--I don't know how much you would have been aware of this--there was a little bit of conflict at the convention with Goodwin Knight attempting to get the vice-presidential nomination. Were you at all aware of that?

Hitt: Not particularly. Only what I read in the papers or heard later. You know, I wasn't there, I wasn't, at that point, involved on much higher than a county level within the party.

Stein: Okay, then that brings us to 1960.

Hitt: From 1960 on, I was on the inside, with some exception. I was on the inside politically.

Stein: In '60 you had been chosen to be part of the Nixon delegation?

Hitt: Right.

Stein: How did you come to be chosen for that?

Hitt: I was asked by Nixon to be a delegate. I had been asked by the California group that was putting that delegation together. Shortly after that I had a telephone call from Pat Hillings, who at that point was close to the Nixon campaign, close to Nixon, saying that "the Boss," as his staff and those working closely with him always referred to him, that "the Boss" wanted me to be the national committeewoman. It was essential that I be on the delegation. I wanted to be on the delegation anyway, and that invitation had come before and I had accepted. But that phone call from Hillings began a whole series of interesting developments. It was very much like everything that ever really happens to me.

Yesterday we talked about goals that my family had for me, or goals that I might have. I didn't have any goals. I wasn't looking toward anything. I wasn't working toward anything. Everything that ever happened to me, and all of the things that came to me, just came. They always came as a surprise. I would have to say in all honesty, I resisted almost every one of them to begin with because I sincerely felt there were others better qualified or had earned it.

Now as far as being asked to be a delegate, no. I didn't resist that, because there were lots of delegates, and I thought, yes, I do want to be a delegate. Thank goodness they were kind enough to ask me. It was going to be a great experience.

But when the call came from Pat Hillings on behalf of "the Boss," as he said, to be national committeewoman, I said, "Oh no, Pat. That's not right. It ought to be Gladys O'Donnell." I said, "Gladys has been in this thing for a long time. I know she wants it. I know she loves it. She's earned it. I don't think I have. I don't think I'd be good in it. I think Gladys could do a better job." Pat said, "No, but the Boss wants you."

Hitt: Usually, as the case was, it would be my husband and my family that would turn the tide in the decision. I said, 'Well, Pat, I've got to do a lot of thinking about this. Gladys and I are good friends. I know that Gladys would hope that this would be coming to her. I know that she wants it. She deserves it. The federation and this state would feel that she did. I have very grave doubts as to the wisdom of this, and how much resentment [it would create], how Gladys would take it, how federation people would take it,' and so on. I said, 'I have to think it over, because unless I think it's right, I won't do it no matter what.'

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Hitt: When I said, 'I don't think I'm ready for it; I don't think I'm capable of it; I don't think I know how; I don't think I've been in this thing long enough,' they knocked that into a cocked hat. They said, 'Oh, don't be ridiculous. This you can do.' When I brought up the subject of Gladys, they said, 'Yes, you've got a good point there. You do have to think about it. You're close friends, you wouldn't do anything to hurt her.'

What I did was, I went to Gladys. I called her and said, 'Gladys, I want to come down and talk to you about something.' I went right down to her and I laid it on the line. I said, 'You know, this isn't easy, and I don't want to infer that anybody, including Dick Nixon or anyone else, feels that you don't deserve it or you can't do it, but this is what they've asked me to do.' It was tough, because I know that Gladys hoped for the appointment.

She was magnificent! She said, 'Why, Pat, absolutely! Yes, I would like to have it.' And she said, 'Yes, I know that there's a good deal afoot at work and some quiet campaigning in my behalf.' She said, 'There's nothing I'd like better, but after all, it's up to Richard Nixon. He heads that delegation and he'll be the candidate. It's up to him. I think you can do a great job and I think it'd be wonderful.'

I was a lot younger at that time than she. As I said, she was absolutely magnificent. From that moment on, she saw to it that every bit of campaigning in her behalf ceased. Letters, calls, anything. Anything she could control stopped in her behalf from then on.

Some other people called. I talked to Rose [Mary Woods]; she called. I talked to Bob Finch, a number of people. All of them were adamant and kept insisting on it.

Then we ran into the very strange situation in California. I don't know if the law says it, but it's customary that if the national committeewoman is from the south, the committeeman would be

Hitt: from the north or vice versa. Then we ran into the situation where they had asked the committeewoman first. This had been the first decision and the first choice, and they didn't go any further with exploring anything until they had a yes or a no from me, so they knew geographically.

Then we got into the strange situation where there were a number of Southern California men who wanted that desperately and felt they should have it.

Stein: I see. And this is why George Milias's name was suggested?

Hitt: Well, George was a Northern Californian. George was the state chairman.

Stein: I see. Who were some of these Southern California men who wanted it?

Hitt: Well, Ed Shattuck would have liked to stay on. There were a number. I really don't want to go into that. So if it was going to work, in order for me to serve as national committeewoman, they had to find somebody in Northern California that was satisfactory to Nixon and they felt was willing. Well, it took some doing. There was a period of about two, two and a half months. The first phone call came to me in January prior to the convention. The delegation would be elected in June.

It was April or May before they had Joe Martin. It was a long time. Joe said yes, he'd do it. We had never met. I didn't know anything about him. But anyway, they did manage to come up with a national committee candidate from the north, and then everything was fine from there.

But there was much criticism. There was criticism within the federation of it, too. I wasn't just thoroughly one hundred percent totally accepted by everybody in the federation. Cecil Kenyon wanted that job. She wanted it desperately, and she was terribly upset when I was picked. She thought she should have had it. She and Gladys weren't close particularly either.

When the decision was made, then the next step was to line up people to nominate and second these nominations. So obviously as state president of the federation, Cecil was asked to nominate or second me, and she refused to do either. Absolutely! The men were working and talking to her, but there was real bitterness there. It never came out in the open, and it never came between the two of us. We were always pleasant to each other and tactful. No, she refused to do it.

Hitt: I can't remember who it was, Finch or Arbuthnot or [Jack] Drown or Hillings or who, but we had a big strategy session. This was just the night before the nominations were to be made. This was in San Francisco where the delegation was convening prior to going to Chicago. The men felt that it was very important--and they were right--that a top-level federation woman nominate or second me.

While Gladys would have been eager to do it, very much wanted to do it, the feeling was that there should be somebody else. Gladys could give one of the seconding or a nominating speech, if that's the way it worked out, but there should also be somebody else within the federation that represented another faction, another part. Lucile Hosmer was the one that came through.

I had met Lucile. I had done a lot of touring of Northern California and campaigning and helping one way or another when she was head of northern division and a vice-president of the state federation. I said, 'Well, all right. I think maybe Lucile would do it. But I don't know whether Lucile will fly in the face of Cecil or not.' That was a tough thing. "But I'll ask her."

I talked to her, and she said, "Sure, I'd love to, Pat." She said, "I think it would be great. I don't give a darn whether Cecil likes it or not," which took courage, because Cecil Kenyon was a very, very dominating, domineering woman. Some of the men used to refer to her as, "There's a tough ol' biddy." [Laughter]

So anyway, that's a sidelight. But it all worked out, showing that while Cecil did have considerable dominance in the federation at that time, she couldn't call the shots for everybody. I had spent so much time in the state with federation people that while I'm sure that it was an enormous surprise to them to see me move up so far so fast, they were very sympathetic towards it, and very supportive.

I always had marvelous, marvelous support above and beyond from the federation women in the state all the way through in campaigns or anything, particularly in those older days, until we got into a couple of little fights later.

Stein: Where did Cecil Kenyon stand in the political spectrum?

Hitt: Ultra-conservative. She was closely, deeply involved in the Knowland campaign, and she was one of the major voices in swinging him to that stand on the right-to-work. That was such a terrible mistake.

Cecil had been in it a long time. Cecil's political judgment wasn't very good. She was a federation leader but no one would think of her as a political strategist. She was a power because of her

Hitt: presidency of the southern division, and then her state presidency, so she was always a power because of the federation. At that time, the federation in California had a big membership, a very large membership and was very powerful. It was the workhorse of the party.

She was often included in campaign strategy sessions, simply because she did represent the federation. They couldn't cut her out. But I have no recollection of her ever having any real influence on decisions or how they were made. You wouldn't say that she commanded the respect of the political strategists, because she just didn't have that good a judgment or sensitivity. Cecil couldn't really take herself outside her own beliefs, such as the right-to-work issue. She did not have the capability. Because she thought it was right--she didn't have the capability of moving outside what she wanted, to think through, "Well, all right. What's going to be the reaction of the average person?" or "What's going to be the reaction of the opposition? What can you expect?" She was not a political strategist at all.

Gladys was. Jean Wood [Fuller] I would imagine was. I didn't know her that well in those days. I wasn't inside, but my guess is that she would have been.

Stein: I gathered that she was also. That's been my impression. Was Cecil Kenyon as far right as, let's say, Lucile Hosmer?

Hitt: Yes, or more so.

Stein: Or more so?

Hitt: Yes. I never knew, and I don't suppose anybody else ever did, whether Cecil ever at any time became affiliated with the John Birch Society. But she was very, very close to Eck [Edgar] Hiestand and John Rousselot. Eck Hiestand at the time was a congressman. He and John Rousselot were the first two congressmen who ever came right out and said, "We're members of the John Birch Society," and gave a defense of it.

Yes, I would say that Cecil and Lucile differed in their conservatism. Lucile's is more inclined to be a constitutional conservatism, a Pro-America kind. Cecil was more the ultra-conservative from the standpoint of her personal philosophy. Now that isn't really very clear. I know what I mean, but I don't know how to get it across. It was a different type.

Stein: I know that one of the big issues on the right then was abolition of the income tax and even abolition of public schooling.

Hitt: I would say they probably both would have been in favor of abolition of the income tax. Of course, let's face it, Mimi, I don't think that is the best example in the world, because I think that you would find that there's hardly one of us that wouldn't like to have it abolished if there was another way of doing it. Nobody's happy about it.

As far as public schooling is concerned, that's more typical. No, I don't think either one of them were conservative to the extent of a Clarence Hoyles, who used to be the editor of the Santa Ana Register, one of the Freedom papers, who was against all public schools editorially in his newspapers. That's here in Orange County. The Santa Ana Register is one of their papers. The old man is since gone, and it's not quite that bad now.

But no. Neither of them would have been that conservative. But then I don't think that generally speaking, the John Birch Society, which I consider to be the height of conservatism, was exactly against public schools. But they wanted to run them. They wanted to manage it. I don't think that they were against public schools per se. I'm still trying to get at the difference between Cecil and Lucile.

I think Lucile had a greater sense of concern for people, not a tremendous amount, but more than Cecil. Well, I don't know that I can do any better explaining. They were both conservatives, but it was a slightly different kind.

Stein: Getting back to the election of national committeeman and national committeewoman, the reason I brought up George Milias's name is that I had read somewhere that there was some degree of behind-the-scenes maneuvering, and that George Milias had wanted it or had hoped to get it.

Hitt: He probably would have. But there was obviously some reason why he was not the choice of Richard Nixon, because George is from the north. That would have taken care of the north-south problem.

Stein: My notes say that Milias was a Knowland man, and I wonder if that may have been the reason.

Hitt: It could have been. In later years it wouldn't have been, because Milias was a Republican, period, and he was state chairman. But it's possible that there was some distrust because of the fact that he had been a Knowland man. Remember, in 1960, you still didn't know what Knowland's attitude was going to be. They wouldn't have wanted anybody who they thought was a strong Knowland person. They wanted nothing but strong Nixon people. That's possible. I don't know. I don't even know if George was a strong Knowland person, but if he was, that could have been one of the reasons why they moved away from him.

Stein: I don't know either.

Hitt: Joe Martin was not [a Knowland supporter]. He had never been identified with any other candidate, and had done some campaigning and support for Nixon.

Stein: So then you were elected national committeewoman at this caucus in San Francisco. When was that?

Hitt: The end of June, prior to the convention in Chicago, which was either in July or August. I can't remember which.

Stein: It was probably in August. Most of them were in August.

Hitt: Usually they are, but I kind of have the feeling that that might have been in July. It doesn't matter, anyway. I remember the caucus in June. I was elected as a nominee. Formally you're elected at the convention. The convention does the formal electing, but it's a blanket vote. I did not serve until after the convention. Marjorie served as the national committeewoman through the convention, same as I served as the national committeewoman through the '64 convention. Ann [Bowler] didn't take over until the closing session. The confirmation comes at the closing session of the convention.

Stein: [Looking at notes] The New York Times reported that the caucus was July 9 in San Francisco.

Hitt: Was it in July?

Stein: Yes.

Hitt: Well, then the convention was in August. Incidentally, Joe Martin is a practicing attorney now right there in San Francisco. He'd be a good source for you on a lot of this. Anyway, you can find him there in San Francisco. Joe did serve in Washington for a while. He served as deputy director of the FTC [Federal Trade Commission] and then he served also as the number two man in a series of conferences in Geneva under Miles Kirkpatrick, under whom he served Miles Kirkpatrick at the FTC. But Joe would be a good one. He might have a better memory. I think that Joe might very well know what the circumstances with Milias were, because he knows George Milias. He's close to him; he's a Northern Californian. He would then maybe have greater knowledge of the jockeying that went on to get a man in place than I would, because he was a part of it. He wasn't necessarily a part of it, but he was the ultimate choice. So he might.

Stein: As a matter of fact, I'm just looking at this note of mine from a New York Times article that said that the choice of Martin over Milias was influenced, according to Milias's allies, by Robert Finch. So that's something to ask Finch.

Hitt: Yes, ask him, because he was very much involved as a strategist all the way through, and very close and had enormous influence on Nixon.

##

Stein: One more question about the national committeewoman: Marjorie Benedict held that office for twelve years, and I see that after she relinquished that post, nobody ever held office that long again.

Hitt: No.

Stein: Was that because of her, or because--

Hitt: Circumstances. Circumstances and a change in attitude on the national committee. The national committee had a brief period of about four to six years when it was really quite powerful. From about '60 to-- well, from about '58 to about '64, the national committee was quite a powerful organization on its own. Before that, it had been kind of a figurehead body. The committeeman was expected to raise money and the committeewoman was expected to be a hostess. That wasn't just California. That was true of many states. On the other hand, many of them were very actively involved in setting up precinct organizations. Not so much in California, because the state committee per se took that over.

Then beginning in about '58, emerged a much more prominent position for the national committee. Many of the old, old timers that have been there for a long, long time were replaced or retired. From then on, it became much more politically active and influential.

I would have to say that Nixon in '60 was the first one that really made it more of a political instrument. Insofar as possible, he wanted in his own state and in other states, people friendly to him.

And then in '64, Goldwater went all the way with it, in purists. Then in '68, it didn't really become that political again, except that obviously in '68, you would have a big turnover from the reaction in the Goldwater campaign of '64. Any time you have a radical change in national committee personnel management, attitude, membership, then four years later when it's somebody else that's more or less running the show, you're bound to have a big reaction.

##

Stein: I have another question which is totally off that subject and which is really not part of the interview. I'm about to start interviewing Marjorie Benedict. I just wanted to ask you some advice about the best way to proceed. We have a little problem at the moment in that she is just recovering from a broken ankle or hip--something like that. She's put off interviewing until she could get her house back in order and get around a little bit more easily.

I had one preliminary session with her, and I gather she's a fairly formal lady.

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: I wondered if you had any advice about her.

Hitt: Yes, she's quite formal, quite proper. I have great respect for Marjorie, great admiration, because she fulfilled the job. While schoolteacherish at times--this isn't going on the tape? [Mrs. Hitt did ultimately allow this to be included] --at times, she carried that load. She was very conscientious. She did everything that she should have done. Anybody that came into the state, any Republican party official who came into the state from outside, was beautifully taken care of. She ran the RNC--California operation--and she did a very, very good job. I personally will be eternally grateful to Marjorie, because Marjorie had been national committeewoman for either eleven or thirteen years. I don't remember. A long, long time. I had never known another national committeewoman in my experience.

Marjorie would have liked to have continued as the national committeewoman, so that it was not her choice to resign.

Stein: Whose choice was it?

Hitt: Well, it was Richard Nixon's choice, because he was the candidate in 1960, and that's the way it works. It wasn't formal, but it was his delegation. So that Marjorie wasn't happy about it. She would have liked to have stayed on. But she never quibbled--believe me, when her term was over, that was it! She bowed out, she stepped back; she stayed active, I think in her local federated club, but never another thing.

I have seen a lot of times when people who had held positions like that, both in the party and in volunteer organizations, when something was over, boy, they just couldn't let go of it. As far as I know, I would swear, that she never nitpicked me to anybody, even privately. I'm just sure she didn't, because I think she was just so completely fair, unlike a lot of women, being relieved of something they really didn't want to be relieved of. And let's face it,

here I was years younger, not all that well known, had not worked my way up the ranks, so to speak. I had some following, but I think we went over that last time, my own feelings about it.

Stein: Yes.

Hitt: Marjorie would have had every reason, and been nothing less than a human being if she had interfered or criticized the mistakes that I made, pointed them out to anybody or anything like that--she never did. We just never saw each other. I never heard from her. She backed clear out. She didn't keep being active in anything, which was not an easy thing for her to do, but it was the thing that was ultimately fair. It would have been difficult for me any other way.

Stein: How did she manage to stay national commetteewoman for twelve years? That is, as you say, a fairly long term.

Hitt: Well, Marjorie was pretty close to Bill Knowland, and Knowland, you see, as United States Senator and candidate for governor and one thing and another, was more or less the factor there. I don't know how--I doubt that she was close to Goodwin Knight. I don't know. But I don't think that he ever had sufficient power within the party in this state to have done anything about it. She may have been on good terms with him, too. I don't know. I can't put those two together, but she and Bill Knowland, yes.

Stein: Was she like a Bobbsey Twin to Bill Knowland, or did she have independent ideas of her own?

Hitt: You know, I really don't know, because I wasn't involved in it. I would guess that Marjorie was a team player, and it wasn't just Bill Knowland, it would have been the national committee. Marjorie would have done whatever the national committee chairman said to do, or Knowland or anybody else.

Marjorie would have had a certain amount of independence. I think that Marjorie, if she'd had an opposite view, would have argued it, and if she lost it, she'd have been a team player.

Stein: Was she ever challenged for the position?

Hitt: Not so far as I know.

At the Republican National Convention ##

Stein: Let's talk a little bit about the convention itself. Is there anything that was particularly outstanding about the convention?

Hitt: I don't remember. There was probably infighting, but you see I wouldn't have known or been involved in it. I wasn't the committee-woman yet. I'm sure that there was. Marjorie was not happy about being relieved. Ed wasn't particularly happy. Both of them would have liked to have stayed on, so that there might have been [infighting]. Marjorie was pretty closely associated with Knowland, as I remember. She was not associated with Nixon. She'd been closely associated with Knowland. So had Ed Shattuck.

I just had a ball. It was my first convention, first time. I just had the time of my life, with no responsibilities. I could do all of the fun things, go to everything. I knew there was some infighting going on between the Rockefellers, the Nixons, the residue of Knowland, a whole lot of things, but I wasn't involved in them. I was a non-combatant.

Stein: Did you serve on any of the committees?

Hitt: No, because you see, I was not officially the committeewoman yet. I was part of the escort committee. I was one of the ones who was named to the escort committee for Nixon after he had been formally notified that he was the convention nominee and then came to the hall. That's an honorary appointment. But that was all.

As I said, I simply went along as a guest for all intents and purposes. Tom Kuchel played a leading part. You really should talk to him. I'm sure that he'd be available. Tom would be absolutely candid with you and forthright, I'm sure. You'd have to weigh a little bit of it with his own prejudice, his own bitterness, obviously, but Tom headed up the California delegation. He was the chairman of the delegation, presided at the delegation meetings and so on.

The Campaign

Stein: What did you do in the campaign itself?

Hitt: Spent ninety percent of my time on the road in California, up and down the state. I did do some campaigning outside the state of California too, but not very much, almost all in California. I made

Hitt: two or three campaign appearances in Colorado and in Arizona, and, as I remember, in Oregon. But only a little. It was almost entirely in California. At that point, I wasn't out of the state all that much.

Remember, I was a newcomer on the scene to most people. I was the national committeewoman, but I'd only been that two or three months and who knew whether I would be a help or a hindrance or what. This is a big state that we were responsible for carrying, so there just wasn't any time. But I did campaign constantly up and down the state: every town, every city I could get into, every invitation we could wangle for me to come and speak to anything and everything, partisan or non-partisan, all of the TV and all of the press interviews, anything and everything that we could get.

I will always remember one: you know how newcomers, babes, just stumble into things. At that time, of course we were campaigning against the Kennedys, and the whole Kennedy operation. I will always remember my first major press conference. It wasn't really a press conference, but it was a speech that I was giving in San Francisco that was heavily covered by the press. I hadn't been national committeewoman very long. There's some clips in here about it, I'm sure, that will give you a date.

Dear loving God, if I didn't take off on Pierre Salinger! He was kind of a front runner in that campaign. I didn't know him, but he struck me as not the most savory kind of a person in the world. I didn't know that Salinger was a San Franciscan! I wouldn't have done it out of courtesy, if for no other reason. I would not have slashed out or made a smart-aleck or a derogatory reference or remark about Pierre Salinger in San Francisco if I had known he was a San Franciscan. I was just stunned when it was all over and I found out. Not that I would have thought any differently of him; my opinion wouldn't have changed in Los Angeles or San Francisco, but out of pure courtesy, I would not have done it.

I didn't have any impact. I mean it didn't hurt him any. He probably laughed about it. It was probably a great big joke. But simply I would not walk into somebody's home town and lash out at him. A candidate maybe, but not staff.

Stein: I remember reading in a clipping about a comment that you made about Joan Kennedy getting on an airplane and bumping a sailor.

Hitt: That was the damndest thing I ever saw. It was an incredible thing. I made a comment about it and pointed it out later as an illustration of what sharp campaigners, how quick that whole family was to pick on anything, because I saw and watched it. It was a loaded plane coming out of San Francisco, I think. I was already on the plane,

Hitt: and the plane was full and there was a big standby. A lot of the standbys were servicemen on standby because it would be free transportation. I think it was coming to Los Angeles. I don't believe that it was cross-country. I don't remember what the flight was. But it was within the state, because Joan Kennedy and Teddy and the Kennedy family were in this state constantly during that '60 campaign.

I was sitting in my seat. The doors were just about ready to close, and they had seated the standbys. On the plane comes Joan Kennedy and a couple of other people. Of course, passengers recognized her immediately. I did. I don't know that everybody else on the plane did, but certainly I did recognize her.

She came on the plane late, and the stewardess had to go over to a sailor and tell him that she was sorry, he had to get up and give up his seat. As I said, I watched the whole thing.

She walked on the plane and stood up by where the cockpit and all is, and reported to the hostess, and the hostess said, "Just a minute, I'll have to go--" The minute Joan Kennedy saw that hostess walk toward the serviceman, up came her purse like this [she gestures as if to quickly cover coat lapel] to cover the Kennedy button. I do not mean it in a critical sort of a way. To me, that is mighty fast thinking in a campaign. It was just instantaneous. She had a great big Kennedy button on. It was an instantaneous thing, because it would have been the worst kind of campaigning or public relations for her to march to that seat identified not as a Kennedy but as a Kennedy campaigner and bump this sailor.

I would not have bumped the sailor had I been her. I would either have been there in time that there wouldn't have been that problem, or if I was late and had found out that I was going to bump the sailor, I would have turned right around and walked back out and gotten wherever I had to go some other way.

But on the other hand, she didn't, but she covered it up. By the time she got to her seat, she had that button off and it never went on again the whole flight. There was no identification with the Kennedy campaign all the rest of the flight. This was quick. This was quick thinking.

[tape off for interview break]

Stein: Joan Kennedy had just--

Hitt: I cited it as an example of the quick response, what politicians they were. I don't think I said it in the article. I don't think I would have, what I said to you. The fact is, I wouldn't have done it. It was quick. It was a quick political reaction, but it

Hitt: was not a good political act. It would have been much much better if she had left the Kennedy button on and gotten on that airplane, and if after they went to the sailor, and it became obvious that she was going to bump a sailor, she said, "No sir, absolutely no way," turned around and walked out of that plane, even if they had to charter a small plane to get her to wherever she was supposed to go. They could have afforded it, and that would have gained them points, where the other--maybe they lost them, if anybody else other than I realized what was going on. They certainly didn't gain anything.

It was quick, but it wasn't the smartest way to handle it.

Stein: Who else did you work with in that campaign?

Hitt: In '60?

Stein: In '60. I know Bob Finch was national campaign manager.

Hitt: Yes. I worked with Bob Finch and I worked with Len Hall. He was involved. I worked with Herb Klein. They were on a national level, but when they were in California, we were all together in strategy meetings, and when the Nixons were here. Oh, Arbuthnot, Jack Drown, all of the regular entourage we worked with. I worked of course with the federation women, local leadership. I said Herb Klein. I worked with the national committee in the national campaign. I worked with [Bob] Haldeman. I don't remember [John] Ehrlichman from that campaign. I would imagine that John was involved in it, but not in California, because he'd do advance man work. He would temporarily come into campaigns. And I worked with the party leadership in California, the state chairmen of the federation, the campaign leadership on the national level, all those who were involved in that campaign, because California was a critical state. It could make or break the campaign. It was absolutely essential that we carry it, and a great source of pride that we did. We lost the nation but carried the state.

It wasn't easy, because California was a critical state.

##

Hitt: The '60 campaign was tougher in some ways than the '62 gubernatorial campaign.

Stein: Really?

Hitt: Yes, in some ways, because we were still working with the wounds, the still fresh wounds, of '59. Neither Knight nor Warren were eager to support any of them [the Nixon people]. There were not eager and willing to go out of their way to help, and didn't.

Stein: How about Knowland?

Hitt: None of them did, really. A little token kind of a thing. They didn't take him on. They didn't criticize, but they didn't make any real effort. None of them did. That, plus the fact that we had that incredible Kennedy family; they had Bobby and Ethel and Teddy and Joan and Rose. The only thing they didn't have was Jackie, but she wasn't in the campaign anyplace. I'm not sure that she would have been a great asset in California.

Stein: Why not?

Hitt: The others could adapt to California. The rest of the family more or less adapted to California. I don't think she could have. I think she was so patently Eastern that I'm not sure that she would have been a big asset to him. The others certainly were. There's no doubt about it.

Stein: She was pregnant then, wasn't she?

Hitt: I think so.

Stein: I seem to remember that that's why she didn't play a very big role anywhere.

Hitt: And of course she did not like campaigns, period, to begin with. But she was pregnant.

Stein: One of the things that I remember reading about that campaign was that there was a minor difference of approach between, on the one hand, Pat Hillings and some of the Southern California people, and, on the other hand, the PR agencies of Whittaker and Baxter and Baus and Ross, who were doing a lot of the PR, about the tone of the campaign, as to how much Republicanism per se should be stressed, or how much it should be on a more non-partisan level. Do you remember that?

Hitt: Yes. That was a typical-- There is always, in California, a difference of opinion on any statewide campaign between the north and the south. It's two different kinds of approaches. You've got two different kinds of electorate. You have a much more conservative electorate in the south. In many ways, the electorate in the south is more like the Midwest than they are like Northern California. Northern California is more, in many ways--I think less now than it used to be--liberal. You campaign in Northern California more like you campaign in New York or in the East. You campaign in Southern California like you campaign in the Midwest or the Southwest. So it's different. And you always do have a difference.

Hitt: Whittaker and Baxter were very San Francisco-oriented, very Northern California campaign oriented. Baus and Ross were Southern California oriented, but their forte had been primarily municipal bond elections, bond elections and issues, rather than so much with candidates.

Of course, Hillings was a grass-roots campaigner. So there was [a difference of opinion], but there always is. What it finally came down to, to all intents and purposes, was that the campaign in Southern California was adapted to the electorate in Southern California, and the same with the campaign in the north. It didn't mean that we said one thing in the north and another in the south, or that the candidate did. I don't mean that. But the style of things we did was different in the north and south.

But it always is. Fundraising is different, or it used to be. It may not be any more, because the state's gotten so big. The old San Francisco entity per se in politics is not like it used to be, because the fundraisers and the people have left San Francisco in droves and moved to the suburbs.

Stein: One of the things I came across--I think it was in your clippings--was that you gave what the article called, "the first political address in Whittier" in that campaign in '60, at a political rally at which John Rousselot also spoke.

Hitt: That's entirely possible.

Stein: Do you remember that?

Hitt: I don't remember it, but it's entirely possible.

Stein: Was he at that point associated with the John Birch Society?

Hitt: In '60 I would be sure that he was. I'm trying to think. Was Pat Hillings still a congressman at that time from that district, or had John taken over Pat's seat? No. Pat left the Congress to run for statewide office. That was in '58. He and Cap Weinberger--that was his big contest with Cap Weinberger in the primary, and Pat Hillings won it. So Rousselot was undoubtedly the congressman, because Pat left the congressional seat to run for statewide office, and he won the primary but went down in the slaughter of '58 along with everybody else. But it's entirely possible.

John Rousselot and I don't agree philosophically, but if he was there as the congressman and there as a Republican, I would have been too. I've shared a platform with all varieties of Republicans and it doesn't bother me. We can disagree philosophically, but we're both working for the same candidates. It represents a broad spectrum of the party that I really want to see. That sounds contradictory.

Stein: Not necessarily.

Hitt: While I think that the John Birch Society was a very dangerous thing--and I wish it had been the Democrats' instead of ours--I wouldn't try to write them out of the party. I believe you need--let's open it up. Let's have all spectrums. I just don't want to see the right or the left dominate.

Stein: In the 1960 campaign the California water plan was also on the ballot.

Hitt: Probably. There invariably is a highly controversial ballot issue in the big elections that just messes it up for a fare-thee-well. That's why I think probably basically I don't like initiatives. I think it's a rotten way to write law. I'm not in favor of it. I don't like it as a politician because it obscures the basic political issues and the candidates. But even aside from that, I just don't like it.

We've passed some of the worst legislation we've ever passed that's come on the ballot. It's the prerogative of the assembly or the state legislature. If you get to a situation such as we had with Reagan and the state legislature and they can't get along, then I think it's up to the people within the party or the people of the state to beat the two of them over the head, the two bodies, the governorship and the assembly. Public pressure can make them work together, and that's the way it ought to be.

The minute you're trying to write law on a ballot, then it gets totally obscured. It gets emotional, people get all riled up. Half the time they don't know what they're voting for. Now we've defeated, fortunately, some of the worst ones. But we've also passed some pretty terrible legislation. I got 'way off the subject, but I'm sure there was something [on the ballot in 1960]. There always is. It's the bane of the political campaign manager's existence, those ballot issues, because it drags in something else totally and often times becomes a major factor in the campaign.

Stein: One of the other things I wanted to ask about the '60 campaign was if Murray Chotiner played any role.

Hitt: Yes, he did, I don't remember what, but it was on a quiet level. As far as I know, Murray Chotiner was involved at least in an advisory or consultant capacity in all of the Nixon campaigns, I don't think he was ever left out of any of them. As the years went on, to a lesser degree was he in the spotlight, because he became so controversial, but he was always there. You weren't going to walk away from those brains and that judgment and that political savvy.

Stein: Did he have any problem in the party? It may have been a couple of years before that, but I seem to remember reading that he had been read out of the party for influence-peddling, which made no sense to me.

Hitt: I don't remember. It might have been.

Stein: But was there any such scandal?

Hitt: Yes. Oh, he was terribly controversial, always, and not very well-liked. Really, I would say that a lot of the Nixon people had great respect for him, but even some of them didn't like him very well, and of course, the Knowland and the Knight people and the other factions couldn't stand him. He did some crazy things. He backed Howard Jarvis one time for a campaign, which just almost threw us all into a tizzy. Why he did it I'll never know.

Stein: What was so bad about that?

Hitt: Oh, Howard Jarvis was a-- Well, he's still running. He was the Harold Stassen of California. Pops up out of the woods. He was a disc jockey, an extreme right-winger, and one time Murray managed his campaign. Nobody ever figured out why or what, but that didn't endear him to the hearts of lots of people. I would say yes, he was [involved in the 1960 campaign]. I don't remember really in what way, but I'm certain that he was, but in a quiet inconspicuous manner.

Some Observations on the Nixon Defeat

Stein: Is there anything more we need to say about the '60 campaign?

Hitt: No, except that the results were a shock, I think, because I really think that not just Californians, but I really believe that most of the Nixon campaign people and most Republicans, thought Nixon was going to be elected. The defeat was by a very small margin. I can well remember the vote-fraud investigations that came afterwards, Nixon's decision and the consultation and the meetings that were held on that, and also in the national committee's own investigation.

It was a stunner. I remember so distinctly we knew early that the California election night party was to be held at the Ambassador Hotel. I remember Bob and I drove in. We got there about eight o'clock or eight-thirty. We were going to have dinner in the coffee shop and then go on up to the headquarters and the election night room. We knew before then it was lost. At that point, we were

Hitt: thinking, "Oh, God, please California, at least vindicate us. Please, our own state don't go down the tubes." That would have been the absolute last heartbreaker of it.

But even though it was close, we did think we were going to win California. We were putting at least California in the Nixon column all along. But there was an awful pall over everybody at the Ambassador Hotel that night by eight-thirty or nine o'clock. You still hoped but it didn't look good.

Stein: I guess at that point, it's more that one hopes he isn't going to lose too badly.

Hitt: No, we still hoped, given the fact that it was as close as it was. There was good reason to still hope that you were going to make it. You know, it came within what, a hundred and twenty thousand votes?

Stein: Yes, it was very close.

Hitt: It was so very, very close that we hoped that we would make it. I really think there were many factors entered into it: certainly that awful TV debate.

Stein: I was just going to ask you what you thought the effects of it were.

Hitt: And the serious knee injury, and having been through two bouts of knee surgery. I know about the pain of something like this, how difficult it is. It lingered on for a long, long time. Yes, there's no doubt but that there were two things that won that election for Kennedy, casting aside the vote fraud. Let's face it, it [vote fraud] was there. There's just no two ways about it.

Stein: Chicago along--

Hitt: Missouri and Texas. It was an incredible theft that developed as the national committee went into a real in-depth study of it afterwards. But taking that aside, I think the two things that lost the election for him were that debate, that one debate when he looked so God-awful. That was a mistake, I think, to debate Jack Kennedy, in retrospect, but nobody knew that he was going to come off that well and Nixon was going to come off that poorly.

The other thing was the manner in which the Nixon campaign, typical of all Nixon national campaigns, handled the party, the Republican National Committee people. That certainly didn't help. I've often laughed and said I spent four years as national committeewoman trying to placate other national committee members and smooth the troubled waters, because the Nixon campaign determined that it was going to follow the old "Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon" format.

Hitt: The national committee members and the party organization as such in the states was badly abused and ignored and there were hurt feelings and wounded pride, which I don't think was necessary. I know what the strategy was, and I can look at the national committee and understand it. An awful lot of those national committee members were pretty old, and they were pretty much over the hill. Many of the state party committees weren't very effective, and the leadership wasn't very effective.

But there was a way of bringing them in and using them and still bringing in the outsiders. There was a way of doing what they sought to accomplish without leaving dead bodies, a great long path of dead bodies. The Nixon campaign did do that. The extra effort, the extra support, the extra enthusiasm that the various state party people and organizations would have given the campaign, if they had been less shabbily treated, could have--would have, I'm sure, made the difference in that close an election.

The national party, the state party--they were not capable of electing him by themselves. You had to have a citizen organization, you had to go to outsiders. They simply weren't that good, that effective, that well organized or productive. But I think it was a deep mistake, a great mistake in strategy--I thought so at the time; I still think so--to abuse them as they were abused in far too many states. Outsiders from the state who had never done anything politically, never given any time or anything else to recommend them to a candidate, were brought in and put in top-level positions. Yes, they were people of influence. They certainly did bring votes in because of their position, but they left an awful lot of broken and mangled bodies, which was not necessary. But for some reason or other, that was always the pattern. It was the pattern in the '62 campaign for a little different reason. It was to a great extent the pattern in the '68 campaign.

It was my part of the operation, the women's organization and whatever I was involved with, that invariably would turn to the party organization and bring them in. If it hadn't been for that group, we would have had the same thing all over again.

Stein: Were you consciously trying to do that in '68?

Hitt: Yes, you know I was, having spent four years as the national committee-woman listening to the horror stories of what had happened. You bet your life. I went into that '68 campaign knowing what had happened and knowing that something had to be done by somebody somewhere to prevent as much as possible a repeat of '60.

Stein: How did you manage that?

Hitt: I worked with them. I consulted with them. If nobody else asked them, I did. I met with them, kept close ties, asked for their suggestions as to women or individuals and brought far more women into leadership. We had women co-chairmen on every single solitary level. We either had a woman who was a chairman--whether it was a city level or county level or state level--she was either a chairman or a co-chairman. There was a woman on every level.

That was done. It wasn't easy. It was one of the stipulations that went with my doing it. I wasn't going to be a figurehead. I was going to have a free rein, and I was going to do everything I could and that was it. It was a battle, even after that! But there were not as many broken bodies left after '68 as there were after '60.

Stein: Then after '60 you served, my notes say, on the executive committee of the Republican National Committee. Is that true?

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: And what did you do there?

Hitt: Like any executive committee does in any board. The full Republican National Committee was made up of a hundred and some-odd people. The number would vary. It was always the national committeeman or committeewoman from each of the fifty states. So you had that hundred base. Then according to Republican National Committee rules, in those states which carry for the presidential candidate--[for example, from '61 on, those states which had carried for Nixon] those states where a majority of their congressmen were Republicans, or those states that had a Republican U.S. Senator--the state chairmen also went on it. That's why it varied.

The national committee only met two or three times a year. Obviously they couldn't conduct the major business, so the executive committee of about twelve to thirteen or fourteen conducted most of the business with any decisions or action being ratified by the full committee. That's really what it amounted to. California was always included on the executive committee, California and New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois. Those big powerful states always had either the man or the woman on the executive committee. The rest of it was made up of representatives of smaller states. California was why I was on it.

1962: Nixon for Governor

The Campaign

Stein: Moving on to the '62 campaign: did you have any input into Nixon's decision to run for governor?

Hitt: Yes, very definitely.

Stein: What's the story?

Hitt: But my input went for naught.

Stein: What were you advising him?

Hitt: Not to. As a matter of fact, I think Bob Finch and I were almost the only two that advised him not to, the only two major advisors. But there were many meetings and many consultations held with Californians both privately on the phone and in group meetings as to whether he should run or he should not run. As I remember it, and insofar as I knew, I'm sure there were others that said he shouldn't, too. But of the what you would consider the twelve or fifteen topmost advisors and strategists, I think Bob and I were the only ones who both felt he shouldn't, and for two different reasons, probably.

I can remember what I said to him in his law office when he was with Adams, Duque and Hazeltine. We were discussing the whole thing, and it came my turn to give an opinion. There were about six of us, six or seven of us in the room. I can remember saying, "Look, Dick, I think this would be good for the Republican party. I think it would be good for you to be a candidate, because you are well-known. You did carry this state. You can heal the wounds and bring it together."

But I said, "For yourself, I think it would be a big mistake because it's too big a gamble." I said, "California is too unpredictable." That was my point. I said, "Nobody can guarantee you're going to win. You can't, or anybody else. [Joseph] Shell is strong. There's going to be a contest. He's going to pull the ultra-conservatives and the money and the John Birch Society is going to be an issue, whether you like it or not. At some point, you're going to have to say something for or agin 'em. And when you do, you've lost a whole segment of the party one way or another, and the support."

Hitt: I think the major point was that California voters are too unpredictable, the gamble was too great. I said, "If you don't make it in the primary or you don't make it in November, you're through. Why take that chance? There are other ways of keeping alive until '64 or '68," which is what he was looking at. That was my feeling.

Almost without exception, everybody else felt differently about it, because I think that we were all convinced that Joe Shell could not beat Pat Brown, as unpopular as Pat had become at that time with many people. Joe Shell was not going to do it, and couldn't do it. He could not rally the support. He'd get the right-wing vote, but he wouldn't get much else.

So from a party standpoint--Cap Weinberger and Joe Martin and a lot of the rest of them were looking at it from the party standpoint--if we were to have any chance of winning this governorship, it's with Richard Nixon and not with Shell. There was nobody else that would have a chance of winning, which I think was absolutely true, and I agreed with that, except that I felt very personally it was too great a gamble.

Much of what we discussed did come to pass. The John Birch Society did become an issue, and that's what licked him. You know, it was a funny one of those things. While he did attack the John Birch Society, the funny part was the reaction of non-Birch conservatives. They misinterpreted--his attack was not an attack on conservatives. It was an attack on the John Birch Society, period. But the conservatives and the Shell people in the state either took it as or moved it around to give the impression that he was attacking the conservatives, which he was not at all. That was part of the problem.

It was a brutal, bloody primary, and the Joe Shell forces never did support Nixon in the general election. Some of them voted for him, but a hell of a lot of them didn't. Some of them didn't refuse to endorse, some of them did. They didn't refuse to endorse, but they never did anything. They didn't work for it; they didn't do anything. They didn't make any effort. That's what lost it.

If the party could have come together and totally supported-- But I think the same thing would have been true had Joe Shell won. At that point, I don't think there was any way that the party could totally come together on either of them afterwards, to beat Pat Brown, because it was too bitter a primary.

I can remember laughing and saying, well, as national committee-woman it was my obligation to campaign. Now there I did step out. I did step out of the neutral role in that one, for obvious reasons.

Hitt: Everybody would have expected me to. It was perfectly legitimate, and at that point, it wasn't going to hurt the party any.

But I can remember saying, 'Well, if Joe Shell wins the primary, I'll be out campaigning for him. I'll make a speech and then go to the ladies' room and throw up. But I'll be doing it.' So that's why I say, I don't think the party could have come together on either of them after that primary. It was a bitter, nasty, hate-filled campaign.

Stein: I'm just wondering if that was the beginning of what really blew up in '64, or if you could trace '64 back to '58.

Hitt: It's a chicken and egg situation, a little. I would say more that it was the beginning of what happened in '64. But the other side of it is that by the '62 campaign, there was a massive active Goldwater organization around the country, and most especially in California. The Goldwater people were almost entirely on the Shell bandwagon. They considered Shell to be a more viable supporter of the Goldwater candidacy in '64, obviously. If there's anything in the world they didn't want, it was Richard Nixon as governor of California.

The Goldwater influence was there. There's no doubt about it. Now that I think through it, though, it wasn't at the request of Barry. I don't think Barry himself wanted it to be that way. He stayed out of this state, and he stayed out of the campaign, and I mean he stayed out of it! Barry Goldwater, from the very beginning--unfortunately, never had any control whatsoever over his own Goldwater organization. He could influence and exert control over Republican party organizations and those Goldwater supporters that were a part of that, but the grassroots for Goldwater--it was a monster!

I think that he was as shocked and disturbed and concerned at some of the actions of that organization as anybody else was. But he had absolutely no control. There was no way he could control it, because it was a so-called grassroots group. There was no formal organization. There was no formal committee which could set guidelines for it. It was--not spontaneous, but there was no accountability--

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Hitt: --within the group anyplace. So it was almost a wildfire kind of a thing. But definitely there was a piece of it in the California campaign. There were a lot of strong Goldwater supporters in the Shell team, in the Shell organization. It was primarily that. When Shell was defeated, they were very bitter. They didn't work, they didn't contribute, they didn't do anything to help in the fall. They just sat on their hands and didn't vote, or didn't do anything. That cost him the governorship.

Stein: Were you close at all with Haldeman during that campaign?

Hitt: I worked with him, yes, all the way through in every campaign. Haldeman was only peripherally involved in the '60 campaign, the national campaign. That was Finch [who was heavily involved]. Then when the gubernatorial campaign came along, Bob didn't have the time. He really didn't have the inclination. Out of loyalty, he would have done anything [in the campaign]. But I think there was a feeling on the part of Nixon and others that they needed new management, a new figure and turned to Haldeman. Haldeman had always been a Nixon supporter. He was a vice president at J. Walter Thompson.* He was in that business, so Haldeman was brought in to manage that campaign.

It was not a usual campaign. I believe that Finch would have been able to deal better with the John Birch issue and the Shell issue and the conservatives than Haldeman, because he had more campaign experience. But I don't fault nor can I blame Haldeman for losing that campaign. Nor do I blame Bob Finch for really not wanting to take on that primary leadership role. He'd just come through two rugged years, because really that presidential contest in '60 was rugged for two years. It started in '58 and wasn't just a one year campaign. Two years later, to take on another one--his heart wasn't in it.

The Aftermath

Stein: Did you know anything about the business that developed that mostly blew up after the campaign? Roger Kent of the California Democratic Council sued the Nixon campaign over a postcard that had been sent out over something called "A Committee for the Preservation of the Democratic Party in California." It was a postcard supporting Nixon, and the allegation was that the Democrats who signed it weren't real Democrats or something of the sort, that there was some false--

Hitt: I probably did at the time, but I don't remember enough of it to be any help to you.

Stein: Okay. One other thing I wondered about with the CDC was that you were quoted in the Los Angeles Times in 1962 as saying, "The CDC delegates are attempting to gag the voice of the Democrats in California. It is unlikely that any potential candidate will speak up to the party bosses and oppose the inept CDC slate." So you were being critical of the CDC?

*An advertising agency.

Hitt: Yes, I was highly critical. The CDC was, in its way, to the Democratic party what the John Birch Society was to the Republican party. The CDC were the extremists. It was a small group, given the whole Democratic party, the whole Democrat organization and the whole Democrat registration. That was the small extremist group within the Democratic party as the John Birch Society was the small extremist group within the Republican party.

It was as much a headache to the Democrats, the moderate, responsible Democratic party and its leadership and members, as the Birch Society was to all of us. Yes, the CDC was a primary target of the Republican party in most all campaigns because this was the extreme wing, the same as the John Birch Society and its identification with the Republican party was the primary target of the Democrats in campaigns.

Stein: The only other thing I wondered about with the '62 campaign was your reaction to Nixon's final press conference.

Hitt: I was there when it happened, and it was such a deeply emotional thing that I have to say honestly I didn't think about whether he had or had not made a mistake. We had all been up all that night. There were a lot of us involved in that who had put a good many years of a lifetime into Richard Nixon because we believed in him. We believed in his capabilities. We believed in the man. We really thought that he was the best, and we put a lot of ourselves into that election.

Let's face it, there was only one person in the whole wide world that didn't write him off on election night in '62, and that was Richard Nixon. He's the only one. I think temporarily he wrote himself off. But the rest of us did. We thought this was the end of it. This is the end, this is it. This is the end of all these years of work. It was a bitter disappointment, because we felt that this was the end of a man whom we thought had enormous capabilities for good, for governing. We were ardent, ardent Nixon supporters, both of the man and of his philosophy.

We'd been up most of the night, and then we got the word that he was going down to meet the press that morning, so we were all down there. I was standing back behind the cameras and the lights and all the wires and cables, with tears just streaming down my face all the way through the conference. He looked just terrible, as I said. He'd been up all night, and what was to him his whole life was lying in a shambles at his feet. This man's whole life was government, and it was politics. We were heartsick.

I really don't, even at the time and in retrospect, think it was such an unnatural thing. I don't really think it was all that bad. Let's face it, he had been kicked around. He didn't have any

Hitt: friends in the press. Carl Greenberg was the one exception of the major press people. And Nixon did turn to Carl Greenberg, who was sitting right in the front row, and said that what he was saying did not apply to Carl. He said, "Carl Greenberg is the only one that gave me a fair break and objective reporting." (At the time, Carl Greenberg was with the [Los Angeles] Herald-Examiner, the Hearst paper.) And it is true that [Richard] Bergholtz and all the rest of them had kicked Nixon around. It is true, putting partisanship or anything else aside. The media and the press did kick the living daylight out of him. It was nothing new. They always had. Always, from the very beginning, there was this violent anathema between Richard Nixon and the press. It later became TV and the press.

Truly, he never got the slightest break. The publishers would be for him and the publishers, the newspaper, might endorse him, but on the editorial page. On the news page, he was just torn to ribbons all the way through. It was true. There were only two people [who were objective in their reporting] and Squire [Behrens] wasn't there. I think he [Nixon] would have referred to him. There were only two newspapermen in the whole state that really took an objective stance toward Nixon.

Now they were not pro-. Greenberg was not pro-Nixon in any way, shape or form. I would be terribly surprised if Carl hadn't voted for Brown. I don't know whether he did or not. He was not for Nixon. But he was fair and he was objective, and the other one was Squire Behrens of the [San Francisco] Chronicle. Those were the only two major political writers in the state of California that even were fair and objective. Nobody else even came close to it.

You know, I'm not a press-hater. I couldn't be, because I've never had anything but the greatest treatment and a wonderful relationship with the press people. But believe me, he didn't, whosever fault or whatever it was.

Stein: What about Kyle Palmer of the L.A. Times? Was he still around?

Hitt: No. Kyle would have been more objective, but Kyle was ill and Jim Bassett had taken over the editorial position. This was something that was a little hard to understand. I don't think Nixon ever did [understand]. I don't know really what the circumstances were, but Jim Bassett of course had been personally involved in the '60 campaign, and yet did nothing to help or at least, as we saw it, nothing to exert any objective control over the reporting, the news articles. We felt that he could have. Now what happened--I don't know whether Jim was bitter. I don't know what.

Hitt: There was probably, as far as the L.A. Times was concerned, another little piece of it. Buff [Dorothy] Chandler* got a little bitter at Nixon because he didn't bow and scrape to her when he came back home to California. She'd been a supporter. But Buff felt that she should be catered to, that she should be given exceptional treatment. He came back after the '60 campaign and was living in California, and he treated her the same as anybody else. So that probably didn't help either.

Still, I've seen it replayed since. I really still, to this day, don't see anything in that last press conference that was so unfair that it should have become such an issue. He looked absolutely terrible. He did strike out. He did get a little emotional: "You won't have Nixon to kick around any longer," but what he was saying was true. Really, to this day, had he not been so thoroughly disliked in the press corps, I don't think anything would ever have been made of it. But he was so thoroughly disliked that it became a symbol. I really don't know why. It wasn't that bad.

It would have taken some kind of a superhuman person to have gone through that campaign and had as unfair treatment as he had and then lose that critical election. I don't know what kind of a superhuman person could have come downstairs and been laudatory to them, or happy or complimentary. If he had, it would have been pure sham. What really happened was that the facade was down. He said exactly what he thought and what he meant. Instead of the politician, it was the man.

Stein: Do you know if any attempts had been made to prevent him from coming downstairs or to argue against his going downstairs?

Hitt: Yes. Any arguments were rhetorical, because he had no choice, and everybody would have known that at some point, he had to go downstairs and make some kind of a statement. Now it maybe didn't have to be at seven or seven-thirty in the morning, but it would have had to be at nine or nine-thirty. So the most that could have happened was then to put it off a little while. Well, I don't think he'd have looked any better or been in any better mood an hour or two hours from then.

I don't know, but my guess is that Herb [Klein] probably tried to forestall it for awhile, because he thought he had a good idea [of what might happen]. Finch may have had a good idea what might

*Wife of the publisher of the L.A. Times.

Hitt: happen. The guy was unglued and he was going to say what he felt and what he thought, and not what was going to be politically expeditious.

As I said, it was a moot question, because at some point he had to appear. If he had ignored them and never come downstairs, they would have really gone to town then. You know, then the charges would have been unbelievable. I was involved emotionally and every other way with that morning, to be very honest. As I said, I stood there, with the tears running down my cheeks, thinking inside, "Attaboy, Dick. Give it to them." That's exactly the way I felt.

But it's just like everything I ever had anything to do with. The Helen Gahagan Douglas thing really wasn't that bad; we talked about it yesterday. In my opinion at least, it really wasn't that big a thing. I don't think the press conference was that big a thing. His John Birch attack I think was absolutely necessary. I think he had to do it. God, he had to let it be known that he was not going to be beholden to them, but he had no prejudice, but he felt there was a dangerous thing. The fact that the conservatives took it up as an attack on conservatives was ridiculous. But that's the story of Richard Nixon's life. I'm not leading up to a defense of Watergate.

The 1964 Republican National Convention and Campaign

Hostess to the Convention

Stein: Well, after the '62 election then, you went on being national committeewoman.

Hitt: For two more years. Most of that two years was involved with the mechanics, either getting ready for or running the '64 convention in San Francisco. That was a hair-raising experience.

Stein: What did that involve?

Hitt: Since it was held in California, that meant that the national committee members from California had the major responsibilities of the host committee. We had a San Francisco committee made up of San Francisco businessmen and civic leaders, headed up by Dan London, who took the responsibility of raising about \$879,000--I don't remember how much money had to be raised to get the convention, to guarantee the convention costs, which is true with either party, any convention, always.

Hitt: Then the national committee was responsible for the staging of the convention. The national committee appointed the convention chairman, which was Bob Pierce, the national committeeman from Wisconsin. He brought Bob Knowles and several people. There were a number of national committee people who simply moved out to San Francisco in January of that year to be responsible for the national committee assignment of running the convention.

The California committee members were responsible as the host committee for whatever California did and our involvement. As it turned out, I was the host committee, because Joe Martin took a leave of absence to go on the Rockefeller delegation. Cap Weinberger was simply too busy to ever be available for anything, so I did it. I literally moved to San Francisco. I saw what was coming, realized what was coming, so I took an apartment and moved to San Francisco in about March of '64. Either Bob came up on the weekends or I came home. If I were tied up there and couldn't come home, then he came up. We had our weekends together, but that was all.

I had offices in the St. Francis Hotel. London contributed office space for me. I was responsible for all of the physical arrangements that were expected of California, and all of the special parties and events. We did a wine-tasting party at the Fleishhacker estate. We did tours. We got the department stores, with Bernice Behrens' help--she really got them, Magnin's and Saks and three or four department stores near Union Square--to open up about seven-thirty in the morning, three different mornings, and serve coffee, sweet rolls and juice to the wives of the convention delegates and alternates and the women who were coming. Then they did informal fashion shows.

The entertainment was part of California's responsibility, whatever we did. Also the staffing of all of the courtesy operations. There were several thousand volunteers who helped me with that, because there had to be a hospitality suite or a hospitality area set up in every hotel that housed delegates. Somebody had to be there. We had to get Sunkist and other suppliers to contribute the orange juice or refreshments, to donate whatever was going to be there. But somebody had to be there to man it.

In those suites, we did all kinds of things. It was not only having televisions there, but hostesses if anybody dropped in, somebody to run errands. Say a woman stumbles going down the stairs and breaks a heel off her shoe. Well, she's from Minnesota or some place and she doesn't have any idea where to get it fixed. She could take it to the hospitality suite and somebody there would take it to the closest shoe-repair place and get it fixed for her and bring it back. Just all kinds of things.

Hitt: On top of that, we also had the responsibility for the housing and the ticket distribution for everybody in California who was going, whether it was press passes or whether it was delegates or guests. Transportation, busses had to be available at all hours to go to the Cow Palace. It was an enormous, enormous thing. Just hundreds and hundreds of people helping. I had a staff of three paid women to help.

Stein: Who were they? Do you remember?

Hitt: No. I remember one.

Stein: It's probably not terribly important. I seem to remember that Emily Pike had a role in this.

Hitt: Oh, Emily helped. The local Republicans and the committees, they helped in a thousand different ways. Emily--I'll say she helped in every way. It was an incredible operation. Emily will tell you the same thing. We spent months and months getting ready for this event, planning all kinds of activities and courtesies, particularly for the wives, the people who weren't the delegates. Also the delegates in their off hours, because the convention sessions were held, due to the three-hour time difference, at peculiar times. When a convention is in New York or Miami or Chicago, it runs in the evening and hits prime time here. When it was here, we had convention sessions at three o'clock in the afternoon. It was six o'clock in New York. Then there was all that evening, and you couldn't run it very late or there wasn't any coverage. So we had a peculiar time frame to deal with.

But what I was getting at is that we spent months and months at getting ready. The businessman, the merchants, the people in San Francisco were magnificent, what they did. It was extraordinary. They'd never done it. You can imagine what it would be like for Saks or any of those stores to open up at seven-thirty in the morning to have a bunch of women in for continental breakfast and have their models show their clothing.

There were so many things available, and almost nobody went to any of them, because it was such an emotionally charged convention. We, if we'd known, would have been better off to have just not planned anything. All the Goldwater people were so busy night and day drumming up support or holding rallies or meetings. It was almost an uncontrolled situation. There was so much counterfeiting of tickets to platform committee hearings it was hopeless to maintain order.

Stein: Really?

Hitt: Oh, yes! It wasn't just Goldwater supporters. I don't know who-all, because Rockefeller and Scranton also wanted the nomination. I only know that various platform committee hearings were held in the St. Francis Hotel in fairly limited rooms. With press coverage, it would only hold so many people, and there were tickets. The national committee worked it out, giving each candidate an equal number of tickets. Then, my God, they were counterfeited. Mobs of people would show up and then when they couldn't get in, they'd riot.

Some of the Goldwater campaign people were like wild people. It was an eerie, strange kind of a thing. They weren't like normal human beings attending anything. They were just wildly emotional, marching and chanting and storming the rooms and protesting. There were a lot of very unpleasant people. As a result, they almost literally boycotted everything that was planned for their entertainment or comfort or anything else. Oh, it was a headache. And complaints!

Bill Knowland and I had a whing-ding fight over California's delegates' tickets. He and I went around and around in three or four meetings, because I as the national committeewoman--and Joe Martin and Cap and I--had virtual control of those convention tickets, the allotment for California. Since the other two weren't involved, it was up to me to make that distribution.

I had determined early on that other than the delegates' tickets, of those tickets that were available, one-third of them would go to the Goldwater campaign because he had won the primary. There would be nothing set aside for the Rockefeller people, but one-third of the tickets were going to go to Bill Knowland for his Goldwater troops. One-third of them were going to go to the California officeholders, the legislators, the Senators, the congressmen, the state senators, the major city mayors, the ones who were Republicans, because this was one glorious chance that they had to do something for people who had supported them. They were highly prized in previous years. The elected officeholders and legislators had only been allowed two tickets, one for them and one for their spouses.

In making a determination, I had said, "No sir, they're going to get one-third of these tickets, because this is one way that they can say thank you to the troops," because they were highly prized. People would come from any place in California to go to even one session.

This left one-third of the tickets, other than those that went to the national committee members [the gallery tickets is what we're really talking about], because the host committee got a block of tickets, separate, for the use of the San Francisco business community that had supported it.

Hitt: This one-third of the gallery tickets were going to go to the volunteer organizations in the state, in proportion to their membership. The federation to get so many of them in proportion to their membership, the CRA, Young Republicans, any official group.

Admittedly, this had never been done before. It was a totally different approach. There was no precedent for it. But I was just bullheaded enough that I thought this was right and fair. I wasn't going to be bullied and back down, and I had notified the organizations that this was going to be the way, so that I would have their support on it. They'd know what this system was all about. Bill was just wild, because he was demanding ninety percent of the tickets for the Goldwater people in the gallery. Lord, we went 'round and 'round and 'round on it. He got red in the face and he got mad.

Well, it didn't endear me to the Goldwater people, naturally. But anyway, as I said, this went on for three weeks--and I don't think Bill had ever lost an argument in his life, probably. He lost it, and that's the way it went. It didn't endear me to the Goldwater people, so as a result, there was considerable animosity among some of them toward any part of the convention that I had anything to do with.

I don't know how it's been done since. I don't know what's been done. But it was good for the party, because we had a lot of people in volunteer organizations that had never been to a convention and went to their one and only that year. The legislators were enormously grateful. I still think it was a good way of doing it.

Stein: Did you attend any of the sessions yourself?

Hitt: Not very many, because I was too busy. I couldn't get out of that darned office. I did, of course, attend the nominating and the acceptance sessions. But the others that were routine, no, I didn't. I generally gave my tickets to my kids or somebody else. My mother and father and Bob and both our sons were all up there. So I let them take my tickets and they split them up.

Stein: And so you didn't--?

Hitt: No. I had a box. As the host committee, I had a whole box that was mine, so that meant there were twelve people in the box.

Now for example, one of the events that we had done was a luncheon with Edith Head for all of the women. I had made contact with her through an uncle of Bob's who was the head set designer for Paramount Studios for many, many years and a multi-Oscar winner. He made contact with Edith Head. She's a darling person! I just loved her! She came up and brought the famous gowns from the movie stars

Hitt: and the movies for a big fashion show, things that she had designed that went way back. It was sensational! That luncheon was the one event well attended. She was there one night, the night before, so I took her to one session.

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Stein: We were discussing the convention itself, and you had just finished describing that ladies' luncheon that Edith Head did. I asked you if you went to any of the convention sessions itself. There were a couple of sessions that, of course, made the news. One was when Rockefeller was booed. I wonder if you were there and if you had any sense of where the booing originated from?

Hitt: Sure, I know where it came from. Right out of the galleries. Very little, if any, of it came off the convention floor, because most of the delegates would have had better manners than that. I'm sure it came out of the gallery. It was an embarrassing thing. I was embarrassed. An awful lot of people were embarrassed. We were on national television. That didn't need to be done. One or the other of them was going to come out with that nomination. We were going to have to pull together. By that time it was absolutely obvious that it was Barry Goldwater.

I've always thought it was too bad that Bill Scranton let himself get mixed up in that last-minute fiasco. He's too fine a person, too fine a man, too bright and too capable. It was a last-ditch move on the part of the moderates and the liberals and everybody other than the conservatives in the Republican party across the nation: for God's sake, let's have some alternative!

But the Rockefeller booing was disgraceful. It was disgraceful behavior for civilized, supposedly grown men and women. The boopers all had Goldwater buttons and decorations and paraphernalia. It was the gallery, it was not the delegates. There might have been a scattered delegate here and there that added his voice. That I couldn't tell you, I don't know, but that wasn't where the bulk of it was.

Stein: Were you there when Goldwater gave his acceptance speech?

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: What was your impression of that?

Hitt: I cringed, because I really felt, again, that it was a strategic mistake. It was a catastrophe, because he all but said, "If you weren't with me forever, I don't need you now," and that was not what needed to be said. If he were ever going to be elected,

Hitt: he needed and had to have everybody. I think that was the time in all of his life, if there was ever a time, when the olive branch should have been extended in a gracious manner, and he had nothing to lose. He was the winner. It would have added to his stature in every way. It really was kind of unlike Barry, because Barry Goldwater was very much a party man.

I can remember--I've been to events here when Barry Goldwater would come on the stage and campaign for Tom Kuchel, and those two were miles apart! I've been to events where I introduced Barry, or as national committeewoman I was there. One was a Kuchel rally. Barry's sole purpose in being there was to urge everybody to support Tom Kuchel.

So it really was unlike Barry Goldwater. Barry, as I said, had always said, "Open up the party. Make room for everybody. Bring everybody in." He had campaigned for Republicans of every stripe. Tom was a fellow Senator, and he wanted him re-elected, for lots of reasons. He had seniority.

So it was an un-Goldwater thing. It was an emotional kind of thing. I think a lot of his backers and supporters probably had gotten to him and gotten him all stirred up. The moment did it. Something did it. But I felt, at the time, and I still do now that it was a terrible speech to give under those circumstances. It would have cost him nothing to have opened up the ranks to everybody. It would have been really more typical of Barry than what he did, or the Barry that I'd always seen or known.

He would have gained so much and lost nothing. His wild-eyed supporters that loathed everybody else in the party, they were with him anyway. He wasn't going to lose them by welcoming everybody else aboard. He had the golden opportunity to bring the people that supported Rockefeller, that supported Scranton, just everybody into his campaign.

Nixon had done that for him in making a nomination speech. I think Barry owed it to the party, owed it to everybody there. It was a loud clear signal that the ranks were going to be closed. They had been up to that time. Boy, if you weren't a Goldwater purist, get lost! We want no part of you. You know, you almost had to have been Goldwater before you were born.

That speech simply made it loud and clear that that same situation was going to exist after the convention, instead of "welcome aboard." God knows he needed everybody, and everybody's brains and everybody's advice and everybody's support. He chopped it off at the pass, right then and there.

The George Murphy Senatorial Campaign

Stein: Is that then why all the former Rockefeller people ended up in George Murphy's campaign?

Hitt: Not just Rockefeller people. The Murphy campaign was a combination of Kuchel people, Rockefeller people, Nixon people, because it was perfectly obvious that we wanted to get involved. There were a lot of collective brains and years of experience and a willingness and time to give. We wanted to be in something. It was perfectly obvious that we not only weren't wanted, but we'd be booed out of the Goldwater campaign. There would be nothing--no way--that we could contribute anything. Murph was tickled to death to have us.

Of course, it was a beautiful thing for Murphy, because if Barry had handled it right, poor Murph would have been left with a few old-time friends. Most people gravitate to a presidential campaign rather than a senate campaign. But it handed Murph one of the most potent campaign organizations that's ever been put together in the state of California. There were Goldwater people in it too.

That Murphy '64 campaign and that committee was the most broad-based committee I've ever seen put together for any candidate in the state of California.

Stein: Did you expect Murphy to win?

Hitt: Yes. Murph was a well-known guy, and had a great deal of charm. Oh, there were times when Finch and I would be climbing the walls, Murph would make us so nervous. He had a tendency to get way over in right field, more so than either one of us felt that he could or should do in a state-wide campaign, because he had the song-and-dance man image to overcome.

We could always tell, the two of us always knew, when George walked into that headquarters--in five minutes, we knew whether he'd been with Pat Frawley or not. It was just that simple. Everything would be going along just fine, and George would be using his head, and he wouldn't be going out on a limb, and he wouldn't be getting into the extreme positions, and then, he'd walk into the headquarters one day and he had some wild-eyed right-wing idea or cause. He was all charged up, and we knew damn well he'd been with Pat Frawley.

Stein: So there was all that right-wing money then coming into the Murphy campaign as well?

Hitt: Yes. There was a lot of other money. It wasn't any more right-wing money than any other, but there was, yes. I said that was the most broad-based [campaign]. He had money and he had people, active workers

Hitt: and campaigners, from every section of the Republican party. We were all down there working together, you know, right, left, in the middle, everything. You can do this in a campaign. If you've got a candidate you believe in, and you've got a choice, any reasonable, responsible person can bury any philosophical differences if you're working for a common cause.

Stein: One of the things that was confusing about that campaign is this observation in the Western Political Quarterly article about that election. [Reads from article] "The Goldwater conservatives [in the 1964 election] were completely discredited in the loss of the state to Lyndon Johnson, while the moderates," (the moderate Republicans, that is) "achieved signal success in electing U.S. Senator George Murphy,"* which makes it look as though it was the moderates who elected Murphy.

Hitt: It was. As I said, it was a broad based campaign. There were a lot of people involved all the way across the line. But primarily, I think the Goldwater people, most of them, voted for Murph. They supported him and so on. There were some of them working in the campaign, but the big names in the campaign were moderates, with Finch and Hitt heading the list.

The two of us did draw the moderates into it. Most of Murph's campaign chairmen and the counties and districts and all up and down the state were moderate. As I said, most of the conservatives were deeply involved in the Goldwater campaign and they didn't have the time. The moderates weren't wanted. They had no place to go. Here this was their vehicle. But by the same token, Murph did have the support of the liberals and the conservatives. Speaking of liberals and Kuchel people--it's not necessarily one and the same, because I was always a supporter of Kuchel, but I supported a lot of others too. I was also a defender of Kuchel.

The liberals were so furious at Tom because he wouldn't endorse Murph. That was the beginning of the end of Tom's political career. He could never rally his old troops around again with any enthusiasm. He couldn't ask others to do what he hadn't done, what he refused to do himself.

Stein: Was that just a matter that he was taking his support for granted, or was it a principled stand? He must have realized what he was doing.

*Totton J. Anderson and Eugene C. Lee, "The 1966 Election in California," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 20, 1967, p. 538.

- Hitt: Tom? No, hell. He thought he was there forever. He was too over-confident. You see, the Birchers and Frawley had been after Kuchel for a long time. I don't know where it started, but if you remember, there was that despicable charge of homosexuality made against Tom. It was absolutely, totally false. Well, it came from the far right. I don't know who.
- Stein: Yes, as a matter of fact, that's documented in this book.*
- Hitt: Yes. So of course he loathed and despised the right wing, including Pat Frawley.
- Stein: There were three people who were indicted on libel charges that arose out of that. One of the three was one of Pat Frawley's lieutenants.
- Hitt: Yes. Tommy loathed Frawley. He absolutely loathed the John Birch Society. He demanded that if George Murphy wanted his support, he would have to denounce the John Birch Society and Pat Frawley and all the rest of them. Well, George and Pat have been friends for years at Technicolor and all the way through. George wasn't about to denounce anybody, and as a matter of fact, we didn't want him to! We'd seen what happened in '62 when you denounce that group.

Well, Murph had to have those people. It was a personal kind of thing. He wasn't about to do it. The best advice that all of us in the campaign could give him was don't do it. We told Tom as much, and tried to tell Tom that he was committing potential political suicide.

Stein: What actually did you do in the Murphy campaign?

Hitt: I organized the Women for Murphy up and down the state. That was the first experience that I had on a statewide level getting into small fundraising. We initiated what we called Minutes for Murphy coffees,

*See Bryan W. Stevens, The John Birch Society in California Politics (West Covina, Calif., 1966), pp. 6-7. In the fall of 1964, a smear campaign was launched accusing Senator Kuchel of homosexuality. "A former officer of the Los Angeles police force," writes Steven, "had sworn out an affidavit that he had arrested Kuchel on a homosexual charge in 1949. Copies of this affidavit had been distributed all over the United States by patriotic bookstores and Americanism centers, many of which are owned and operated by Birch chapters or Birch members..."

"Kuchel demanded a complete investigation and four individuals were indicted on charges of conspiring to commit libel." One of these men, John Fergus, had been a top public relations advisor to Patrick Frawley.

Hitt: which were neighborhood coffees, and we had all the gimmicks that went with it. People were asked, those who came, to contribute a dollar, and those that would were asked to have another one (a Murphy coffee). It was kind of a progressive sort of a thing. All those dollars went to buy TV time spots.

It was the first time we had ever done, as far as I know, a small-time fundraising project to support a specific expenditure. That's the secret of it. People like to give if they know that that money is going for a particular purpose, rather than just going out in salaries or miscellaneous expenses. We stumbled onto that.

I'd known for a long time that people were like that, but had never done anything about it before. It was very successful. A lot of the spots that Murph had, TV and radio spots, were paid for out of those Minutes for Murphy funds. They were always credited. Whichever it was, it always said, "Paid for by Minutes for Murphy," which was the women's organization.

Stein: I see. That was one of the devices that you mentioned earlier that you carried over to '68.

Hitt: That I carried over to '68 in different forms. But that was it. It was a big organization job to do. It was a difficult one. While there were lots of homeless Republicans wanting to work, at the same time most of the money, most of the emphasis, most of the attention was on the Goldwater campaign. It's awful tough to run a statewide campaign in a presidential year, because the cream goes to the top. Everything goes.

While there were lots of people, we had a long time finding a lot of troops who would give the time and the effort. We had already been told both directly and indirectly that the Goldwater precinct operation would not "double up"--that is canvass, distribute literature, telephone to get out the voters, etc. for any other candidate.

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Hitt: It became obvious that the tactics and the behavior and the attitudes of a lot of the Goldwater supporters were driving people away. We didn't really want to tie the Murphy campaign into that. We really had to set up a totally independent, separate kind of an operation, so that there wouldn't be that animosity spillover, or that revulsion, which is what it amounted to in many cases.

It wasn't easy, because people are not as eager to work for the second spot as the first, and not so much that or lack of troops, is that by its very nature, and by a lot of the individuals involved, the Goldwater campaign took so much of the public spotlight that it

Hitt: was awfully hard to get any attention. They so dominated the spotlight, good or bad, that it was difficult to get any kind of attention. But we did manage to organize a huge network of women who had had the door slammed on them too. You know, what you're really doing is instead of being able to use the party mechanism or combine candidates or run with a slate, you were strictly on your own. But it had to be that way.

Stein: What were some of the other fundraising gimmicks that you thought of?

Hitt: Well, everything was green and white and carried the Irish clover: all of our letterheads, our insignias, all of our mimeographed or printed material and bulletins. We sent out regular bulletins up and down the state. Everything in the women's operation was green, green and white for Murphy.

Then we set up a tour for Dennis and Missy, the son and the daughter, and put them on the road. We took that over. We put them out into the small towns; the places where Murph couldn't go, we sent the kids. They were fabulous.

Getting back to the green for a minute: we even had green drums made for the mimeograph machine, specially-made green drums to carry green ink and converted our mimeograph machine.

Then we used those same phantom coffees, which carried over into '68.

Stein: And what were they?

Hitt: I think that was the first time I ever used them, as I remember. It was a non-party but you sent invitations. We had a mimeograph that printed them up by the thousands and gave them to people. There was a little verse on them that said something to the effect, "if you're tired, if you're busy, if you don't want to come to coffee, just send a dollar. Instead of baking a cake or giving a coffee, just send a dollar." They were called phantom coffees, because they were invitations to coffees that were never going to happen. The idea was instead of coming to the coffee, instead of baking the cake or instead of having one, you just send a whole lot of these out to your friends and the friends hopefully would send back a dollar. It was a good gimmick. It worked. We raised a lot of money on it. A little envelope came with it for the money to come back in to the headquarters.

Really, I think the Minutes for Murphy, which was a major activity, went all up and down the state, and the phantom coffee and the tours and the use of the kids, two kids. Oh, and then we had a lot of young gals in cute costumes and bowler hats. We had

Hitt: them in every community and every county. What the heck did we call them? Murphy gals or something like that. Anyway, we got them--there was a white skirt, white blouse routine with a bowler and the green ribbons. We got that worked out so that every time there was a Murphy rally or event in a given county, these gals would be there. A cheerleader kind of thing.

Then I also set up in every county men and women in a surrogate program. There were candidates' coffees and candidates' forums put on by every Republican club, women's clubs, civic groups. Obviously Murph couldn't make them all, so we set up a surrogate organization, a part of the Murphy campaign, a little like a speaker's bureau but not exactly, in every county and in virtually every city where we had a Murphy campaign entity. They appeared in behalf of Murphy. We sent material and supplies, and we kept them primed with position papers.

Insofar as it was humanly possible, Murphy was always represented in person by somebody at every candidate's night, PTA, whatever it was, all up and down the state. It was a major undertaking. But I think it paid off. I think it was important, because there was always somebody on the spot. If it wasn't Murph--and it rarely was--it was one of the kids or some local person who was there ready to stand up and represent him. No opportunity ever went by default.

Then we did the Murphy telethons. That was the first time a telethon had been used, I think, in a statewide race. That was part of the major campaign strategy.

The first Women for--a candidate organization was born in the Murphy campaign, Women for Murphy. That was the first time that we had the women within our party--well, within either party that I know of--as a whole separate entity, a whole identifiable piece and part of the campaign, with its own materials, its own gimmicks, its own budget. Later we had Women for Finch. Then went on to develop Women for Nixon-Agnew in the '68 campaign.

That concept was born in the idea that instead of just turning it over to clubs or groups, on a hit-and-miss basis, women should have their own arm of the campaign, a full-fledged arm of the campaign.

Stein: Was that your idea?

Hitt: Yes. First it was tried out, and it was very, very successful. It made a lot of money. In doing that, we enlisted every federated club in the state, and all of the other Republican support groups, except at that time the federation was so dominant. The president of every Republican organization in the state got a letter from me asking them to please name a Murphy chairman for their club. That was the Murphy chairman for the city, but that was the person who was responsible, who was the Murphy chairman, for that club unit.

Hitt: That meant that there was Murphy material at every one of their meetings. There was somebody there to get the members to do other things. We used those women within the federation. Then we moved into other voter areas by getting women outside the federation, women who were involved in Junior League and PTA and all kinds of other interests--tennis groups, civic groups, professional groups, auxiliaries, etc.

There, I think, was the success of the Women for Murphy concept and the later success of Women for Finch and Women for Nixon-Agnew. It was a very inclusive effort. It was a vehicle under which you could bring the organized women and the unorganized or the non-partisans, even, into the operation. Nobody was left out. Everybody had a piece. But a gal didn't have to belong to the federation to get involved in the campaign.

Stein: According to one of your clippings, you were able to raise forty thousand dollars in six weeks. Is that true? That's quite a remarkable achievement.

Hitt: Well, forty thousand dollars bought an awful lot of thirty-second radio spots in 1964. It was more radio than TV in those days. Probably seventy-five percent of the radio spots that were used in the Murphy campaign were paid for that way. But the money went to that only. The gross went, not just the net, because we didn't have to take out expenses. Expenses were part of the general campaign.

The gross that came in from the Minutes all went to radio and television, every single solitary penny of it. None of it went to anything else, and that was the promise we made to the women. That's why it was successful. They were dollars we wouldn't have had otherwise.

Stein: Is that the way it worked with Women for Nixon-Agnew also?

Hitt: Yes, except on a much, much larger scale. The Women for Nixon-Agnew--that was the only campaign support organization that more than paid its own way, that returned back to the campaign more money that it expended. For the others, it was all outgo. The Citizens for Nixon-Agnew was an outgo of millions of dollars. The Women for Nixon-Agnew brought back to the campaign more money that it ever took out. That was the purpose. It all went for TV time. It didn't go for expenses. But we bought more TV time and more radio, far more, in dollars, when the final reckoning was gone over than the campaign ever spent campaign dollars on us and our material.

Stein: Were you fairly independent in establishing policy for Women for Murphy?

Hitt: Yes, totally. I had a completely free rein. I generally would go over everything with Finch, bring him aboard, but I didn't have to. I had total, complete independence and free rein. But the two of us worked very closely together. We were housed in the same headquarters every day, all day long. There wasn't anything that went on that we didn't both know. I was party to everything that went on. I was included in the good, the bad, the everything else, the problems.

But as far as the women's organization, no, I had complete free rein. However, they knew that I wasn't going to spend money like mad. They knew that they were going to get everything and more back. I wasn't going to bankrupt the campaign. And also, by that time, they knew that I wasn't going to create any problems either. We had all worked together long enough to know that I wasn't going to go off on a tangent or make some crazy statement or anything. I'd earned the right to be as independent as any man.

Stein: One of the issues in that campaign was Proposition 14, to repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act. The proposition was undoing fair housing legislation which had already been passed. Ultimately the proposition was overturned by a state Supreme Court decision. But 14 was a big issue in that campaign. I wondered if you--

Hitt: Well, I remember 14 being a big issue by the number, but I don't remember it being fair housing. I don't remember any campaign we ever went through that didn't have a proposition. The clean amendment, I think that was the one that Finch fell heir to in '66.

Stein: The what?

Hitt: That clean amendment, the one that Jack Schrade dreamed up on pornography that was just impossible. Unconstitutional, impossible to enforce, radical and so on. I think that was the one that came up in the Finch campaign. Yes, I do remember that there was a proposition. Isn't that funny? I do not remember it as having anything to do with housing.

Stein: What I wondered was: I haven't been able to find anything about what Murphy's stand was on that.

Hitt: He didn't take any stand on it, I can tell you. We wouldn't let him. That's why I cannot remember; the housing just doesn't ring bells. No, both Finch and I as campaigners are adamantly opposed to the candidate taking a stand on a proposition issue. If it's humanly possible to keep him from doing it, we will, because we figure they have nothing to gain, virtually nothing to gain, and an awful lot to lose. It's a totally separate issue. They should campaign against their opponents.

Stein: Proposition 14 was the Rumford Fair Housing Act.

Hitt: Yes, I do remember. It was a hot issue. I know that it was Bob Finch's and a lot of the other attorneys' viewpoint that it was unconstitutional, and it was badly written and it was a bad bill, a bad piece of legislation and unconstitutional. We never allowed a ballot issue to get involved in the Murphy campaign.

Stein: Do you know how Murphy felt about it in private?

Hitt: Well, my guess is that he was against it.

Stein: Against the Rumford Fair Housing Act?

Hitt: My guess is that--I can't think how the proposition was worded.

Stein: The proposition was to--

Hitt: --repeal it.

Stein: Was to repeal the Fair Housing Act.

Hitt: Yes, my guess is that he was in favor of the proposition, but I don't know. It was a bad piece of legislation. Not because he was against fair housing, but because this was a bad bill, a bad piece of legislation.

Stein: The only other thing about '64 that I wanted to ask you about was something in the period before the primaries. One of the things I came across in your clippings scrapbook was that Bruce Reagan had made a statement or written something in which he said that you, Cap Weinberger, and Joe Martin had all said that you would do all in your power to see that Rockefeller was elected. Do you remember that?

Hitt: Vaguely, but not particularly. Bruce Reagan was one of the organizers, and I think the first president of UROC [United Republicans of California], which is an extreme right-wing volunteer organization that broke off from the California Republican Assembly [CRA] that became very conservative. It wasn't conservative enough for them. They still are.

But it was ridiculous. You know, it's just one of those crazy charges. He was not the most responsible person in the world, and he'd get a little excited, as many of them did. No, it was ridiculous. Joe Martin was on the Rockefeller delegation, sure. He was all for Nelson Rockefeller. Cap Weinberger and I remained absolutely neutral. We weren't on either delegation, and I don't think to this day probably anybody but us or our families know who we voted for.

Stein: I was going to ask if you would say.

Hitt: Oh, sure, at this point. I don't know that there's any reason why not. I didn't at that time because I didn't want to cause friction or cause a problem. Sure, I voted for Rockefeller. As a matter of fact, Barry Goldwater and I were better friends than [myself and] Nelson Rockefeller. There was more personal affection between the two of us. But I thought that Nelson Rockefeller would be more electable as a Republican nominee, and a better president than Barry Goldwater. So I voted for him, but it was a quiet kind of a thing. As I said, nobody but my family knew it.

I don't think anybody ever knew who Weinberger was for, so it was a patently ridiculous charge. Neither one of us did anything within the framework of the convention or anything else to aid one or the other. We were meticulously careful. Since Goldwater had carried the state of California, we were meticulously careful to give them every advantage in whatever it might be. If anything, we were unfair to the Rockefeller supporters, if there was any unfairness anywhere, probably, because we felt that the other guy had won it.

The Republican State Central Committee Convention and Election, 1968: the Growing Threat From the Right

Stein: The only other thing I'm curious about in that whole period is even earlier than that. I don't know if you remember this, but in January of '63, there was a meeting of the Republican State Central Committee. At that meeting, there was an enormous conflict that erupted that essentially was over the John Birch Society, although the issue of the moment happened to be a resolution on cross-filing. The way the newspaper reports made it sound, the Birch people have scattered themselves around the room, as was their pattern, and had created quite an uproar. That was when Cap Weinberger was chairman. He evidently had a terrible time trying to maintain order.

Hitt: Yes, he did. But another piece of that was the real issue. The cross-filing I'm sure was a minor thing. But the real contest there was over the chairman and vice-chairman that was to come up. I well remember that Bill Knowland showed up representing Barry Goldwater. I don't even remember who the candidates were.

Stein: The candidates for vice-chairman that year were James Halley and Vernon Cristina.

Hitt: Yes. James Halley was a moderate in the [Gaylord] Parkinson mold. Cristina had been a longtime member-worker in the party, but was a strong conservative--he was prominent in the Goldwater movement. He was Goldwater chairman or something. Anyway, it was a strong

Hitt: Goldwater move. I remember Bill Knowland was determined that he was going to make the nomination for Cristina, because that was to be the signal to all of the Goldwater people, who they were to vote for, and how they were to move. Bill was late getting there. He had been saying time after time that Barry was going to be there, Barry was going to be there, he was going to show up.

Well, most of us knew that he was not, because I had talked to Barry about it, and Barry had said he was not going to get mixed up in this state contest. He wanted no part. He didn't care whether it was Cristina or Halley. There was no way that he was going to come. He had told Weinberger that. He had told me that, he told us no way he was going to come to that meeting and get embroiled in it.

Knowland kept insisting that he would be there. He kept telling the Goldwater people, "He's going to be here."

Well anyway, of course he didn't show, and that really flustered Bill and made him mad. Came time for the nominations, and Bill was to nominate Cristina. By that time, Bill was just incensed. He was beet red, as only he could get. He'd get beet red in the face. There had been a couple of fights, and Cap had not recognized some people that were screaming and disorderly. He used parliamentary procedures, not to stop off anything, but to try to restore some order. Cap was ultimately fair.

But anyway, Bill got the floor, and Bill got up and gave this rousing nomination speech about this great guy, and on and on, thanked him and sat down but never said the name. He gave this great introduction, but never put the name in nomination. Never mentioned who he was talking about! [Laughter]

Then the buzzes started. "Well, who is it?" "Well, who is it?" "Well, who is he for?" Bill realized what he had done, and that really put the cap on the thing. Then people started to laugh, and that made him mad. So it was not his day of glory, and would long be remembered. He went storming out, and Cristina was beaten and Halley was elected. But Bill didn't help Cristina's cause any that day at all. It was a wild, wild meeting.

I remember Cap trying to keep some semblance of order in order to give everybody a chance to talk. The Birchers were scattered all over the room, as they always were, and they were attempting to totally dominate the floor. Cap wasn't about to let it happen. He'd been smart enough to realize that they were going to be there, and they would, according to their pattern, scatter themselves around. He made a conscious effort to recognize two or three people in somewhat the same position, knowing that at least one of them wouldn't be [a Bircher].

Stein: Do you remember that business with the cross-filing?

Hitt: No, I don't. I really don't remember much of anything about cross-filing. Cross-filing was always a great topic of conversation in the Republican party. It was always a controversial issue as to whether it was good or bad. I remember that it was under discussion. I remember that the consensus was that we didn't want it back, that from a practical standpoint, cross-filing has worked to the advantage of the Republican party when we had a majority or close to a majority in this state. But at that time, we had reached a point where it was about three to two Democrats, and it would be murder for us. But Bill Knowland, because he had been elected once in the primary because of cross-filing, couldn't see it. He thought it was the greatest thing, it would be great.

He simply could not take into consideration the fact that the registration had changed so drastically. There had been some inclination among the Democrats to go back to it for that reason. He simply couldn't seem to get it through his head that it would not be to the advantage of the Republican party in these days. He sort of went down fighting.

I remember that cross-filing often came up. In that whole total context, we'd be crazy to do anything to support a return of it. I don't specifically remember that it came up that day, because there were so many other things that it would have been a minor issue: the election of officers, the context of the campaign, the position of the state committee. There were a lot of other things that were much more important.

Stein: At that same election, there was evidently a controversy over the women's vice-chairman for the north. You wouldn't have been involved in that.

Hitt: I would have known about it. Who was running?

Stein: It was Lee Sherry [Smith] versus Audrey Fisher.

Hitt: Yes, there was. As I said, I wasn't involved in it because I was a voting delegate in the south. But I knew about it. At that time--things have since changed, but at that point, Audrey Fisher was pretty much associated with the conservative right-wing. Lee Sherry was identified with the moderates. During the Goldwater campaign, Audrey became really turned off from the conservative mode of operation. She's very much in the moderate stripe today, very practical. Great gal.

At that point, there was an identification as to one being conservative, one being moderate. The contest was again moderate versus conservative. As I remember, the same thing was true in the south. I can't remember who the candidates were.

Stein: I can tell you that. Ann Gallagher won, from Santa Ana. I don't know who was opposed to her.

Hitt: I don't remember either. But she was a moderate candidate. By that time, an awful lot of us were keenly aware of what was happening within the volunteer organizations, not just the federation, but all of them in the state, and what the potential was.

Stein: I was going to ask you if you were aware of that.

Hitt: By that time, we were keenly aware of the fact that there was a real move on to take over the volunteer organizations of the state. Now it was successful, eventually, in two or three years. No two ways about it, nobody could argue. The Goldwater campaign, the Goldwater nomination certainly helped. They, through that campaign, took over the national committee and a lot of party organizations.

Not necessarily '64, but the situation really came to national attention in '62 in the Shell campaign, what was going on, what this was all about. It had been a quiet movement, going on for quite awhile, but not very many people had been aware of it. The Shell campaign spotlighted it. So from then on, the contests really were on the basis of moderate-conservative rather than the individual in most of those races, whether it was the state chairman, the vice-chairman, or whether it was the women's vice-chairman for the divisions.

For a couple of years, we did manage to hold those positions in the hands of moderates. But then all of a sudden, that was down the tubes. I don't think there's been a position held by anyone but a conservative for years. Though they still talk about large numbers in those volunteer organizations, there aren't.

Stein: I noticed that the CRA had its election fairly recently, and elected a woman. She made no bones about how conservative she was.

Hitt: Oh, yes. With the CRA and UROC, it's a contest of just who can be the most conservative. Of course, UROC spun off from CRA because they weren't right enough in those days. At one time, in the early days, the CRA was very, very effective--and I mean long prior to '60, even. In the fifties, it--

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Hitt: was by far the most powerful support entity in the state. It was a responsible and effective body in the party with greater influence than any Republican organization ever has had. But then it went down the tubes, and then the UROC spun off of that, because some of them didn't think even CRA was conservative enough, and it was pretty

Hitt: far out. Then the federation went. The federation really was the last to go. While I notice in the papers that they're all still using the same figures for membership that they were using in 1960 and '62, I know for a fact that it's not true. I think the federation in California still uses the figure of sixty or seventy thousand. My God, they haven't had thirty thousand in years. They've probably got about twenty. [Telephone interruption]

I don't remember now where we were. Were we still at the state committee meeting?

Stein: You were saying that as a result of the right-wing bent of these organizations, their membership had really dropped off.

Hitt: I know that they have. At one time I knew what they were. They had dropped drastically. I know, because I don't know many that belong to them anymore. So as I said, they're still using the same old figures. The same is true even of the national federation. They're still talking in terms of all these hundreds and thousands of women. They haven't had it. I'm sure of it.

I know about the state federation-- There was a time when I think it got up around eighty thousand. I think the highest membership that it ever had was around seventy-nine or around eighty thousand. That was during the O'Donnell and Goodknight terms. It was big and it was powerful. But from then on, as there was an increasing dominance of the right wing, they just drove the others out, in huge numbers.

I have no way of knowing now what it is today, but I would be surprised if they've got thirty thousand members in the state today. But I don't know. I don't know how you'd ever find out.

Stein: Did you know much about the CRA? I think that Nolan Frizzelle was the man who was elected in '64.

Hitt: Oh, yes. He was a Bircher. Yes. That was all part of this same thing. Nolan Frizzelle was an admitted John Birch member and organizer. He organized and headed up one of the clubs here in Orange County. Once in awhile, someplace--I can't remember where--the name popped up the other day. You still see him, but not active.

Stein: Did you know much about the organization of the California Republican League?

Hitt: Yes. The California Republican League never really got off the ground. I think it still exists.

Stein: It does.

Hitt: When California Republican League was organized, its specific reason for being was to be a support organization for moderates, moderates and liberals and the young, anybody that no longer felt at home in the ultra-conservative dominated other organizations. But what had really happened? The idea was great. When we first talked about, I said yes, I think there's room for it, I think you ought to get busy.

But it never really got off the ground, and I think primarily because what happened in this growing domination, this so-called takeover of the support organizations by the ultra-conservatives and the extreme right wing, so alienated people that they became sour on belonging to anything, any Republican party organization. So the league really never had a chance.

If the California Republican League had been organized ten years before it was organized, or fifteen years, and been a going, fairly influential sizable organization at the time that the takeover began in '62 and '64, then I think a lot of people would have left the other groups and gone right into the league. But by that time, they were so turned off, so sick and tired of in-fighting and bickering, that they really didn't want to get into a brand new organization and help build it. A lot of them had started and helped build the other one, and they just couldn't go through all that again.

The league was definitely a moderate group. That's what it was organized for.

Stein: Did you do anything personally with it?

Hitt: Not much, except that I urged that the state central committee accept them, and give them their charter. I did speak and I did give them moral support. I never belonged to it, and I didn't do very much for it. I didn't have the time. But I was supportive of it and supportive of its purpose. Just the timing was wrong. It's a funny thing. The right wing not only drove a lot of old timers or potential members out of the existing volunteer organizations, they drove them clear away from the desire to have a part of any organization. They really cooled everybody.

Stein: Well, I wonder if there's anything more we need to say about '64 and the rise of the right wing.

Hitt: No, I can't think of anything, except that of course the Murphy election and the Goldwater defeat were a bitter, bitter pill for the extremist conservatives to take. Murphy everybody knew was basically a conservative--certainly you'd never put him anywhere

Hitt: else. Murph wasn't really even moderate in most ways. But to see Murph elected because of the moderates and Goldwater go down to defeat was a bitter pill.

In some ways, it probably didn't help the situation. A lot of them just hated all the more, so it was slightly akin to the Finch-Reagan aftermath, but not quite the same.

The Robert Finch Campaign, 1966

Stein: Well, let's move on to '66 then. That's your next big campaign.

Hitt: Yes, Finch, the Finch campaign. Jack Veneman and I headed that campaign.

Stein: How did you get involved in that?

Hitt: Bob Finch was the candidate.

Stein: Well, yes, but there must have been other people running at the same time. That was the gubernatorial year.

Hitt: Yes. Before Bob ever decided to make the run, he asked me if I would help. He said, "I want to know before I get in it. Are you going to do this thing?" because that was the make or break. I was not ever a wildly enthusiastic Reagan supporter. I have become in later years virtually anti-Reagan, but even in the beginning I was not very impressed.

Stein: Why not?

Hitt: Well, I just didn't think we needed another actor. I always had the feeling, and I still do to this day, that I have to believe in somebody's sincerity. I have to be convinced. Whether I agree with them or not is not as important as whether I think they're sincere in what they believe. I respect them for a difference of opinion. I simply never could be convinced of Reagan's sincerity, and to this day I'm not. I just always felt he was on stage.

There were many friends of mine who were enthusiastic about him; Gladys [O'Donnell] was deeply involved in the Reagan campaign, and so was Dorothy [Goodknight], and many of my friends. I voted for Reagan. I endorsed him. But let's face it: two-thirds of his organization was the residue of the old Goldwater nut bunch. I wanted no part of them.

Hitt: I could support Finch wholeheartedly and out of conviction and desire and wanted to work for him. We'd worked together for a long time. Jack Veneman worked with him. We were used to each other, because Veneman worked on the Murphy campaign too, on a different level with the assembly and with the legislators. We felt we were a fairly effective team. We enjoyed working together. We were so used to working together that neither one of us had to stop and think what the other one would think, or check out. We just instinctively knew what the reaction would be.

No, I would not have been really at home in the Reagan campaign. For one thing, as I said, even from the very beginning I had an uneasy feeling about him. I don't know whether I'm right or not. I really don't know. He might be the most sincere guy in the world. He's never convinced me that he is.

Stein: I think it was former governor Knight at that point who came out with a statement that went something like, "Reagan is an actor. Every actor has a director. Who is Reagan's director?"

Hitt: Yes. There were plenty of them. I didn't have all that much confidence in [Holmes] Tuttle, [Henry] Salvatori, all of that group. I wasn't sure that that's what I wanted to be with. I did not want to be involved in the [Ann] Bowler-[Angela] Lombardi group, and the spillover from some of the Reagan supporters. It was a joy to be in the Finch campaign.

As I said earlier, the Goldwater people never quite forgave us or Murphy for carrying the state, and that is the primary root of the Reagan-Finch problems, the animosity that Reagan bears toward Finch and always will, though it doesn't show in public, and also that some of the Reagan troops felt, though not all of them. An awful lot of them rallied around Bob when he ran for the Senate, even though he lost that primary.

The fact that Bob rolled up a bigger majority than Reagan did in the lieutenant governor's race was a bitter, bitter pill. Of course, it was constantly brought up every time the two were mentioned, or that campaign was mentioned, and is to this day! Anything Bob does, if there's an article about it in the newspaper, invariably to this day, it will be mentioned. Well, that galled, and it still does.

There's no doubt in my mind but what Ronald Reagan detests Bob Finch privately and resents him. It proved itself in many ways in '68, in '72, in his attitude as governor of the state towards anything that the president proposed that came through HEW.

Hitt: No, I was not a Reagan supporter. I never would be. I don't know what I would have done, if you want to know the truth, if Reagan had won the [1976 presidential] nomination. I really don't know what I would have done. I was a strong [Gerald] Ford supporter.* Jerry and Betty Ford, we've been friends since--back into the early sixties, the late fifties and early sixties. I was a strong Ford supporter. I think this is one of the most misjudged and unappreciated guys that ever came across the scene in American politics. I hope someday that he'll be seen in that perspective, because I think what he did, under the circumstances, was an incredible accomplishment.

Had Ronald Reagan gotten that nomination, I don't know what I'd have done. I really don't. I couldn't have worked for Jimmy Carter in good conscience. I think Reagan is a terrible person. I couldn't have voted for him. I don't know what my family would have done. We had some hot exchanges, Reagan and I, some in the press.

Stein: In this last campaign or in '66?

Hitt: No, after '68, a couple of times when I was in the state stumping for the Nixon welfare reform legislation and Reagan was unalterably opposed to it. What Reagan really did in his so-called state welfare reform--it didn't save anybody any taxes, didn't take anybody off [welfare]--was create a big showpiece. By then Reagan was opposing anything that he could oppose, legitimately, if it was part of the Nixon administration, because the guy was running for president.

We had some fairly good exchanges in the press. I wrote him the most sizzling letter--not sizzling, but probably the most squelching letter I think I've ever written to anybody. I had one from him taking me on on some statements, and I wrote back to him with copies to the president and Finch and [Elliot] Richardson, who was the HEW secretary then, and circulated it through the whole damn Washington establishment.

Stein: Do you have copies of that letter still?

Hitt: I think I have someplace. I don't know that it would mean anything to anybody else, except those involved knew what I was driving at. I'm sure that it was not appreciated [in Reagan quarters]. It wasn't nasty, but to the point. Anyway, I am not a Reagan supporter. I never have been. I was luke warm in the beginning, and I have become less enamored as the years went on.

*Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan were opponents for the Republican nomination for president in the 1976 election. Ford won, but lost in November to Democrat Jimmy Carter.

Stein: It's gone downhill, in other words. [Laughter]

Hitt: Oh.'

Stein: You were state co-chairman for Finch, I take it?

Hitt: Yes, with Veneman.

Stein: Was your role essentially the same as--?

Hitt: Essentially the same as the Murphy campaign. We had the Women for Finch and that whole operation. I was the women's chairman. I was, in truth, the state co-chairman too, because I was involved in both campaigns and every bit of strategy. I was totally involved in campaign management, but on top of that I also had the women's responsibility, for organizing the women. It was a duplicate, to all intents and purposes. Many of the same people, many of the same women.

Stein: I noticed in my notes that he was running against Glenn Anderson, which makes me think that Murphy was not running against Anderson in the '64; Pierre Salinger was.

Hitt: Yes, yes. I got confused there. Murph was running against Salinger.

Stein: Yes, with the cigar.

Hitt: Yes. Finch was running against Anderson. It was in that campaign that he and Murph had the bloodhounds, because Murph was of course helping Bob in his campaign too.

Stein: I don't know if there's anything more we need to say about 1966. I've heard it said that Ronald Reagan was the darling of women. Was that something that you ever came across?

Hitt: Oh, I don't know. Maybe he was. But I sure never had any trouble getting women to get behind Bob Finch. [Laughter] If you meet him and interview him, you'll see why.

Stein: I've seen pictures of him in your scrapbook.

Hitt: I suppose [Reagan is the darling of the women]. Maybe to older women more than younger women. But I can't remember that that was ever a big issue. I think it was more a philosophical thing than anything else.

Stein: Let me see if the Republican State Central Committee election in 1966 needs to be mentioned. The vice-chairmanship that year was between Dennis Carpenter and Dr. Bernald Tully. Tully was Joe Shell's nominee. Does anything need to be said about that?

Hitt: I don't even think it was even very much a contest, because by then the Shell thing was kind of down the tubes and forgotten. Even Shell people realized that we lost the governorship, and why we lost it. I don't remember that Tully was even a very big threat. I think that Denny had that thing sewed up.

Richard Nixon for President, 1968

Organizing "Women for Nixon"

Stein: That brings us to the 1968 election. Probably the best way to start with that is to find out how you got into it in the first place.

Hitt: Well, in August of '67, I had a call from Nixon in New York asking me if I would come in full-time to his campaign for the presidency. At that time, we knew that my mother was in a terminal stage of cancer, but we didn't know how long. But I didn't feel that I wanted to leave her and not be here, so I had said yes, I'd be glad to do it, but I couldn't go at that point, and I really didn't know when. Much would depend on Mother.

We just sort of left it at that point. They really didn't need me. I said, "I think it's a little early still for it. I don't know what it is, but I've just got to get these things straightened out."

Well, to this day, I don't know how she found out, because I kept very quiet about this. I don't think I even told my father or anybody that I'd had the call. I don't know how Mother found out, but along about October or November, she hit me with it. She said, "Pat, I understand you had a telephone call and you've been asked to do this. Why aren't you?"

I said, "Oh, well, Mother, I think it's too soon. I don't think they're ready for it yet. I'm not sure I want to pick up and move. I don't know whether Bob could do it." I shadow-boxed around a whole lot. She knew. She knew darn well why it was. She said, "Now look here. I think I know what the basic reason is. We don't know what the situation is with me." She'd had it--they first discovered the cancer almost ten years before that, eight or nine years. She had many series of x-ray and radiation treatment and a rugged, rugged time.

Hitt: Anyway, she said, "We don't know what this situation is. I don't know. I want you to do it. It would break my heart to see you give up something like this for me. So something happens when I go. You really don't want me to go thinking I deprived you or somebody else of something." Well, it was really quite an emotional thing. She brought it up two or three times. I knew that it meant a very great deal to her for me to do it, for obvious reasons, and that it would be a very difficult thing for her to cope with if I didn't.

Finally, about November or December, I said, "All right, Mom, I'll go ahead and go at the first of the year," but with the understanding, that I could come home at least one weekend a month. So that was it. It became, as I said, a thing where it would have broken her heart once she found out. So I did. I simply moved to Washington.

In between conversations, I'd had a couple of trips back there and met with Nixon and some of the campaign staff. In the first place, I had said, "All right, I won't come and leave Bob at home. I'm not going to come and be separated." On the other hand, he's in the kind of a business where he can pick up. He was in a public relations partnership. I said, "He can leave it, but by the same token, he certainly can't get back here and sit on his fanny, and he cannot come back there and practice his business, because that would be a real conflict of interest. Neither one of us would buy it. It would always appear that he was getting clients because of the campaign or something like that." I said, "He is willing to work in the campaign. I will not work as anything but a volunteer, but from a purely business standpoint, you're going to have to pay him." I said, "I wouldn't say this if I didn't know that he could do a helluva job for you," which he did do.

I said, "We're going to have to move. We're going to have to pick up everything. We're going to have to break business ties, so we're going to have to agree on something that's a reasonable arrangement for him." As I say it, it sounds a little patronizing, and I don't mean it that way at all, because there was a place for him. He was willing to take far less in income than he had here, but it was perfectly obvious that we weren't going to be separated, and that it had to be doing something together.

When I say it, it almost comes out as though I was creating something for him. I wasn't. That wasn't the point at all. But anyway, they agreed. He went back as the administrator for the campaign operation in Washington, which is where I was working. So we just moved lock, stock, and barrel back there.

At that time, Bob Ellsworth was in charge--well, actually at that time Henry Bellman was still nominal chairman of the campaign. He wasn't even there. He'd gone back to Oklahoma to run for governor or Senator. I don't remember which.

Stein: Senate, I think.

Hitt: Senate. It had been kind of a screwy thing, because Gaylord Parkinson had been brought back in August, the year before, and lasted only a little while. Then up jumped Henry Bellman. Then in January when I arrived, there really wasn't anybody. Henry still had the title, but he wasn't there. To all intents and purposes, Bob Ellsworth was running it. It wasn't until later then [John] Mitchell came in as chairman, quite a few months later. It was really about convention time.

So anyway, I went back and got a staff and got some office space at the headquarters there in Washington. I began organizing Women for Nixon-Agnew. As I said earlier, one of the stipulations I had made was that women were to have an equal participation and equal policy-making positions on every level, if I was going to do it.

Stein: Just technically speaking, since this was before the convention, was Agnew in the picture?

Hitt: No, no. It was Women for Nixon, period, up until the convention. Then we had to change all of our letterheads and logos and a whole lot of campaign material to Women for Nixon-Agnew. No, Agnew not only wasn't in the picture, but who'd ever heard of him? [Laughter]

The other stipulation involved knowing that this was going to be a two-headed campaign with Nixon living in New York, that there was going to be a campaign organization of some kind in New York built around the candidate, because he wasn't going to move to Washington for obvious reasons, and so that we would really be running a two-headed monster out of Washington and New York. I knew that that was going to present difficulties, so the other stipulation was: I said, "Now, if you're asking me to come back here and just set up a women's thing, and try to run it out of Washington and have no voice in the campaign, the general strategy, forget it, there's no way." I said, "I can't do it, and I won't do it. I can't start out to set up something if I don't know what policy is going to be, and don't have a voice in establishing that policy, insofar as it affects whatever I'm doing." So that was agreed. So I was stationed in Washington, but I flew to New York about once a week for meetings. It worked out very well.

I had totally separate budgets for my operation, and a completely free hand. Completely free hand! Not Ellsworth, not Mitchell, not Nixon, not anybody ever told me what to do or what I could do or couldn't do. It was kind of an incredible, beautiful situation. Ideal, because I participated in all policy decisions. I really wasn't accountable to anyone. I didn't have to clear anything with anyone.

Stein: And your office expenses were paid, is that what I gather?

Hitt: By the campaign. And my travel expenses. I said, "I don't want a salary. I prefer to work as a volunteer. I have a totally different status, and that's what I want. I want to be able to say to other volunteers that I'm doing it as a volunteer too. I simply did not want to be put in the position of being paid staff."

There's a very great difference in a major campaign whether you're a volunteer or whether you're staff. There's a psychological difference. The minute you're staff and on pay, then you're regarded-- well, after all, you're being paid to do what we want. If you're a volunteer, you can say, "Look, we can go this way. I've got as much voice as anybody else." It's just a very different kind of thing. But they did pay my expenses, because obviously I was on the road traveling all over the United States a great deal of the time. I campaigned in New Hampshire. I campaigned in the primary states, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Ohio, the whole lot of them, all the way through, so that my travel was taken care of.

Stein: In fact, I seem to remember a clipping that said that almost before you went to Washington, you went to Wisconsin as the primary was shaping up there.

Hitt: It was beginning to shape up there. It was not quite that, because I was in Washington first, and then in New Hampshire, because that was the first one. I was up there in the snow and the cold for a little while. Then in April my mother passed away, and I came back home. I flew back and was there when she died. I'd just gotten in the day before, but she was in a coma so she never knew it. Then I stayed for the funeral and then took my dad back with me to Wisconsin.

We flew from Whittier the day after the funeral to Wisconsin. I thought it would be the best thing in the world, and just plunged him right into a campaign. Then he went on back to Washington, only for about a week, but it helped to get his mind off of that. So I went right from Mother's funeral into Wisconsin and campaigned for four or five days and then on to Washington and back to Wisconsin several times.

The Convention

Stein: Did you go to the convention that summer in Miami?

Hitt: Yes, but not as a delegate, because let's face it, it was a Reagan delegation. He was the favorite son.

Stein: That's what I wanted to ask you about.

Hitt: Nixon agreed not to enter the California primary. There were many meetings held over that, and much discussion. It was a hard decision to make whether or not to field a Nixon delegation in opposition to the Reagan delegation. I really don't know to this day which is right. I think it was probably right to go the way we went, because if we'd have had two delegations, we'd have had a primary fight.

On the other hand, the manner in which Reagan handled it made for an awful lot of very unhappy delegates. But Nixon won the nomination without his own state. I think this is where the Reagan campaign made a serious political error. This action permanently alienated many of the California delegates and deprived the California delegation of the opportunity to play a key role in the first ballot victory of Nixon.

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Hitt: I certainly would not have been part of a delegation pledged even on the first ballot, which the original understanding was, that it would be only the first ballot. Then Reagan changed his mind and held them right straight through, until it was all over.

I certainly was at the convention participating, but more than anything else, campaigning. I had the responsibility for setting up all the social events that revolved around the Nixon campaign, and all of the Nixon hospitality suites at the various hotels and all of our Nixon paraphernalia for sale and our Women for Nixon operations. In addition, I was delegate campaigning day and night--speaking to state delegations as a whole body and assigned delegates individually, in behalf of Nixon's candidacy.

The Florida women, the Miami women in the Nixon campaign were just fabulous. They brought in volunteers by the hundreds, which we set up in my headquarters there at the hotel to get out the invitations. They hand-wrote all the invitations to all these events by the thousands! Those women would come in and work until one and two and three o'clock in the morning, until their arms would drop from handwriting.

I took two of my staff from Washington with me and left three of them there, because they needed them to keep everything going in Washington. I had two of them with me, and we went down about a week early to get it all set up. That was a tough one. That was a traumatic experience for California because of the manner in which that delegation was handled. It was terrible.

Stein: One of the things I took out of your files were these copies of telegrams or messages sent by various people to Governor Reagan asking him to release the California delegation. I wondered what that was about.

Hitt: Well, it was simply that some of these were people that I knew. Emotions ran very high. There was no campaign put on to produce these things, but as the day went by, my lord! We knew that Reagan and California headquarters were flooded with telegrams from home. Some of them who knew me sent me copies, or they would send them to the office and the office would type them up and I'd get those for the files, because it was interesting. It's all a piece of it, and it reminds me of it.

It was a totally frustrating thing. There were a lot of Nixon people on that [delegation]. Bob Finch was a delegate. They had agreed to go on that delegation at Nixon's request and at Reagan's acceptance--to try to keep things on an even keel. These were strong Nixon supporters with the idea that they would be held for not more than one ballot, and that if it looked as though Nixon had it in the bag, they would be released before that first ballot even. It just never happened.

Oh, emotions ran high. They were furious, a lot of them were, just furious, and threatened to bolt the delegation because it was perfectly obvious that Nixon had the convention. There was just no two ways about it. Everybody's delegate count showed that it wasn't even going to be close. As it ended up, he took it on the first ballot without California.

Everybody knew it, including Reagan. Everybody knew that he had it on that first ballot. The decent thing to do would have been to release that delegation to vote however they wanted on the first ballot when it became that obvious that day. To at least let those people that felt strongly about Nixon have a chance to vote for him. As it was, they cast them for Reagan, and before they could even come back and change it, Nixon was over the top. They never got to the end of the alphabet.

Stein: It's ironic that Nixon's home state did not vote for him.

Hitt: Yes. Of course, everybody knew what was going on and understood it, but it was unfortunate. It was three or four very difficult days for a number of those delegates, because they were trying to talk some sense into Reagan. It was obvious before the delegation ever left California that Nixon had it. He didn't do it. He lost a lot of friends.

Stein: What about the vice-presidential nomination? Did you know much about the discussions that went into that?

Hitt: Yes, because I was involved in them. It happened that Agnew was not my choice, but there were lots of people considered--those discussions went on all night long with different groups. The Nixon men discussed

Hitt: the pros and cons. It happened that Volpe was my choice; Governor [John] Volpe of Massachusetts was the one that I wanted to see get that second spot. I didn't know Agnew and I didn't know anything about him. I was strongly for Volpe.

Stein: What about Finch? His name was in there.

Hitt: He would not take it, I knew that. He said, "Oh, yes he was asked." The president asked him, that I know of, on three different occasions prior to it, and even in front of people that night, and he said no, he didn't want it, he didn't want to be vice-president, he wouldn't take it. He turned it down cold.

Stein: Do you know how Agnew got chosen?

Hitt: Yes. Nobody really knew much about Agnew. For some reason, John Mitchell was strong for him. I don't really know why, because I don't think John knew him well. But every name that would come up, there would be some objections, some fault. I remember particularly in the case of Volpe, whom I was advocating, the question came up, somebody said, "You know you can't be governor of the state of Massachusetts and not have some potential problems that might come up, the way that state is. We can't take a chance that there hasn't been some machine politics or something there." Well, Agnew was such a kind of unknown by anybody. He was so little known that nobody had any strong objections to him. So it really kind of came down that way.

With the exception of John Mitchell, I can't remember anybody being really for Agnew, but nobody had strong objections to him. Somebody did [have objections], at least, to everybody else who was discussed, for one reason or another. I think that's really how it all came about. It just worked its way down to Agnew. It was a small state, the state of Maryland. They should have known that what was said about Volpe in Massachusetts had the potential of being true in spades in Maryland. Maryland politics are probably as dirty as anything since the old [Tom] Pendergast-Tammany operations.

Stein: Theodore White, in The Making of the President, 1968, said that one of the things in favor of Agnew was his nominating speech for Nixon.

Hitt: Well, it was good.

Stein: Nixon had particularly liked it.

Hitt: It was good. Agnew was a new face, and a very vigorous-looking person, attractive, a minority, so to speak, a nationality background. I think he hit his all-time high in that speech. [Laughter] He was never that good afterwards. He was willing to work hard, and that

Hitt: was one of the things. He was willing to campaign and work hard. That certainly did enter into it. Of course, so was Volpe, so were any number of others. But Nixon--we all did--had a very traumatic experience in '60 with Henry Cabot Lodge.

Stein: What was that?

Hitt: Oh God, that man was lazy! Not so much lazy as just not geared to hard work. Instead of having a vice-president to help carry the campaign, Nixon was carrying Lodge. Cabot Lodge was a charming person. I mean, a nice person. A nice person, impeccable manners, charming and handsome. But he had to have a nap in the middle of every afternoon and he couldn't campaign on Saturdays and Sundays. He had to have some time off. He couldn't start early in the morning and he couldn't work late at night. It presented real problems in scheduling and everything else.

Above all, this time Nixon was going to have somebody that would work from daylight till dark, the same as he would, that was rugged and a hard campaigner, who didn't get tired or didn't have to have a nap or a weekend off or whatever. Certainly Agnew appeared to have that kind of vigor. So did a number of the others.

Setting Strategy

Stein: After the convention, you went back to Washington?

Hitt: Yes. The day after. I left my two staff gals to pack up supplies, and I flew on back with the Nixons to Washington and went right back to work. Well, not right back either. No, we didn't, because now that I think about it, I went back to Washington for a day, and then we all flew out to San Diego for two weeks. The whole campaign committee and the strategy groups and the national committee people spent two weeks at a hotel in San Diego, at Shelter Island, at which time we were pulling together all factions of the party and bringing in everybody, and talking to them and getting everyone melded in and working out strategy, all day long and half the night for the campaign, and setting up what would be the final campaign leadership.

Stein: In those sort of discussions, were you taking as much a part as anyone else?

Hitt: Oh, yes.

Stein: Were there any other women?

Hitt: Well, on selected topics there were, yes. If we were meeting with national committeepeople, there would be. Ellie [Eleanor] Peterson was the other woman, insofar as I remember, other than the staff. Rose Woods, of course participated. But I was the only woman who was involved in all of them. Every day there would be two or three different groups, different people.

One day it was top national committeepeople. Other times it would be national committeepeople from the various sections. Another time it would be finance. It would be campaign strategy. It would be Nixon. Yes, I was the only woman that participated all the way through in all of them. I was the only woman that participated in the vice-presidential decision the night after the nomination.

Stein: Did you ever sense that any of the men had any difficulty with working with a woman?

Hitt: With me?

Stein: Yes.

Hitt: No. I wouldn't have been there if they had. None whatever. We had a marvelous rapport. There was a great mutual respect and trust. It was a situation where if I hadn't been there, they'd ask why. "Where is she? Get her here."

It was not a male-female kind of thing. I was there from a standpoint of what I had to offer in thinking or experience or being able to read campaign strategy, whatever it was. But I never in my life have been treated as a token woman in politics. I've never been included just because they had to have a woman, or as a token woman. It's always been on an equal basis, on whatever level or in whatever way.

I had just as much voice and I was listened to just as much as John Mitchell or anybody else. They didn't always agree with me, but there was never a time when I couldn't express my opinion. Never, ever was there a time when I felt that I was being humored. I'd know it. I've enough sensitivity to know if I were being humored or pacified or condescended to. No, I was one of the boys.

Part of it, I think I made reference to yesterday, I learned early on in political life. I don't believe I ever lost my femininity. I was never coarse or overbearing. I mean, I knew how to do it. I didn't beat a dead horse. I never used any wiles. I never played on it in any way. I think what I started to say-- I spoke of it yesterday--I learned early on never to make the men conscious of the fact that I was a woman. They never had to watch their language for example. Now, that's a small thing, but it's

Hitt: important. They can say anything in front of me that they'd say in front of a bunch of men. I never winced, and I never blinked an eye. I don't think they ever realized they said it, even. Once in awhile they would, and they'd apologize. I'd laugh and say, "Oh, that's all right. I was raised in the oil fields." That was the way we handled it. I didn't do it myself, but it never bothered me.

I don't believe I ever caused anyone--including Richard Nixon--to feel a sense of constraint or inability to say whatever he wanted and use whatever language he wanted in front of me.

Stein: That actually is an important point, because it's one of the arguments that's often given by men against having women around in politics.

Hitt: Well, I'd have to give them credit for it. Let's face it, it's all give and take. If you want to participate equally, then be willing to be treated equally. If you want to participate equally with the men, then don't set yourself up as something different from the men. Participate in their way. Now, that doesn't mean you've got to use their language, but don't make them uncomfortable with it. I think equal everything is fine, but okay, take what goes with being equal. Don't want to be equal, but special.

Let's face it, we're not talking about coarse men, either. They were all highly intelligent, cultivated, socially at ease men, but men in a group of men use a different kind of language. They wouldn't think of doing it in a group of women. But I never let the situation occur where they felt like they were in a group of women. There was no problem. I would stand up and argue with the best of them.

I didn't make my point and quietly crawl away, either. If I thought something was wrong, I would take on John Mitchell or anybody else, and I'd take them on until I was convinced I was licked and then forget it. Don't go away holding any grudges. I never went away and gossiped. It was never personal. Never, never was any disagreement a personal thing and I never took it personally.

Stein: That's another argument that's often used against women in politics, that they can't take criticism and they tend to show their emotions and they tend to burst into tears if somebody attacks them.

Hitt: That all too often is true, or they take it personally. I think not so much now. I think it's probably not so much now, but it used to be true, sure. You know, an argument between two men is quite--or used to be, anyway--different than an argument between a man and a woman or between two women. Women do tend to bear grudges, I think,

Hitt: a little more, or to take it personally. You just simply cannot. If you want to live in a particular kind of life, you adapt yourself to it. You don't ask them to change for you.

Stein: So you're saying, in other words, that you didn't burst into tears if somebody attacked you?

Hitt: No way!

Stein: Or take it personally if someone disagreed?

Hitt: I wouldn't have, no. In no way whatever. I could have a knock-down, drag-out in a meeting with one of those men and we'd walk out with our arms around each other. Literally! I never took it personally. I never carried it out of the room. It had no effect. I mean, it was an argument, a legitimate disagreement, a difference of opinion, but it never had any personal relationship. It never had any effect whatsoever on our personal relationship. It can't, or a person wouldn't be worth a hoot in a campaign.

I've never been like that with women either. It's not that I'm any different with men than I am with women. I'm not. I just don't take an argument or a difference of opinion as personal, or go away feeling sorry for myself or upset or vindictive or "By God, I lost that one but I'll get him or her the next time." That's for kids.

Women for Nixon-Agnew and Women for Nixon-Agnew Advisory Committee

Stein: The clippings described a couple of organizations that you put together fairly early in the campaign that sounded important. One was Women for Nixon-Agnew. There was one of those in every state with women serving as either chairmen or co-chairmen. Then there was a Women for Nixon-Agnew Advisory Committee.

Hitt: Yes. They were two. The Women for Nixon-Agnew was the working group. That was the nuts and bolts. They were in every state, but they were also in most cities and counties, on every level, wherever, on whatever level we had a Nixon organization. A district or a county or a city or whatever it might be, we had a woman co-chairman on that level.

The Women for Nixon-Agnew Advisory Committee was a totally different kind of thing. It was a group of outstanding women in many, many fields from all across the United States that was really for endorsement. They didn't do very much. Some of them did. Some

Hitt: of them served in both capacities. But most of them knew, when they were asked what that was all about, with Mamie Eisenhower as the chairman, and Anna Chennault, who was a concession to the conservatives, as co-chairman. They knew that there was really no work involved in it, but it was an opportunity to secure the endorsement of many, many public figures. There were about two hundred and fifty women--outstanding women, well-known in the public, by the public, and looked at with respect. Now they did, some of them, do things.

For example, one of the things we called Notes for Nixon was a little notepaper with the Women for Nixon logo on it. We supplied that to everybody, and we asked the advisory committee, for example, "Just drop a note to your friends, anybody you know particularly, people of influence in their communities and tell them you're supporting him and ask them if they would be willing to also, if they'd be willing to be on a campaign committee" or something like that.

Take Faith Baldwin, for example. Never in the world is she going to get out and stuff an envelope or work. [Laughter] But she would join the advisory committee, because she never had to do anything. It was primarily an endorsement. Most of the Republican congressmen's wives were on it. They couldn't get out and work in a campaign. Their husbands all had campaigns. It was a vehicle.

Then we organized the same thing on state levels. Then I asked each of the state Women for Nixon chairmen to organize the same thing on their state level as an advisory and an endorsement. It was an opportunity to show that women of stature and women who were respected and were well-known were for Nixon, where the name would have impact.

Stein: The clippings also mentioned that the Women for Nixon organization itself had three purposes or three goals: small fundraising, recruiting, and getting women to vote for Nixon.

Hitt: That's right. We had many small fundraising gimmicks. Here again, I used television and radio spots as the reason for it, because I had found in two campaigns that that was what really grabbed people. Television particularly is so expensive. You could say, "We need your dollars, because it costs so many thousands of dollars to buy fifteen seconds of television time for a spot," and also say that the spots that we buy will then be identified as paid for by us. And they were, right straight through.

That was one battle, rather long drawn-out, one battle I had. It's the only one I can remember in the campaign. It wasn't a battle, either, but it was one place I really had to bear in on John Mitchell, because it was his concept that everything should go

Hitt: out Nixon campaign committee. I said, "Not on your life, John! We've raised this money for this." I said, "If you want to know the truth, those spots are going to have a whole lot more impact if they carry the designation 'Political advertisement paid for by Women for Nixon-Agnew' than just 'Paid for by the Nixon-Agnew campaign committee.'"

I said, "You're missing a bet. For one thing, we told the women that this is what it's going to be. When they watch it, I want them to know. When they go on, I want these women to know that this is what their dollars paid for. As far as the listening audience is concerned, the other people, it's going to have much more impact to see that there is a bunch of women that care so much that they're raising that money to pay for it."

We had several discussions on it. Finally the candidate himself overruled. He made that decision. He said, "She's right, and that's the way it's going to go." By that time, they had already used some of the money. I said, "Okay, you've had so much of our money, that's so many minutes. I want to see that many minutes of your spots from here on carry our designation, and we did. So it all came out the same."

We used lots of fundraising themes. We used a White House lease, which was drawn up like a lease paper with the White House at the top. It was a petition. It was asking everyone to share in taking a lease for Richard Nixon on the White House.

Stein: That's a very cute gimmick.

Hitt: It was a long legal-size document. It would hold about fifty or seventy-five signatures. The idea was that it was for endorsement purposes. If you'd be willing to sign this lease, then is it all right for us to use your name in endorsement? Or if you're willing, everybody who signs it, leave a dollar. We had those done by the tens and tens of thousand. They were circulated all over the country.

Those sheets, when finished, were sent back to us, but Xerox copies were kept in the local districts so that they could pull those names off, those who had said it's all right, and use them in their local newspaper advertising.

The one that was the flopperoo, the one that cost us money, was the Dimes for Dick.

Stein: I was going to ask you about that one. You mentioned before there was one that was a great idea--

Hitt: It was a great idea, but it didn't work because there was theft in the postal system. It was the doggonedest thing. It was a costly venture. Remember how the March of Dimes used to send out (maybe they still do) those little cards and they asked you to put either ten dimes or twenty dimes in the slots and mail it back to them. It was a very, very successful fundraiser for the March of Dimes.

Stein: I think they only use it now in stores. They have them mounted on display.

Hitt: Well, anyway, it was done by mail, and that's what gave rise to our idea. So we had these made up. They had a slogan on it. "Never spend a single dime. It will buy our TV time." They were an expensive little thing, that double cardboard and slots, to be fabricated. We had, oh, I think probably a hundred thousand of them, with a return envelope. It never occurred to us to have any kind of security system on it, because the March of Dimes had done it. It never occurred to me that it would be a problem.

We got them out and they were enthusiastically received. Women and men just gobbled them up everywhere. They thought it was the greatest idea in the world, and fun. They went on a real push and just wouldn't put a dime across a counter.

Some of the idea came, too, from my mother. Years and years before she died, on one trip to Europe, she and Dad became very much interested in an orphanage in Switzerland that was for children of GI fathers, orphan children of GI fathers or whose fathers had disappeared or come home. She started this thing on her own. She never spent a single solitary dime. She had banks. She would save every dime she or Dad got. She even asked for change in dimes if possible. It was amazing what a challenge it became.

Then every year about Christmas time, she'd open up those banks, and there would be several hundred dollars in dimes that would go into a check for that orphanage. So I knew that a dime, not spent could accumulate, if you really wanted to do it.

Everybody was very enthusiastic. We thought we had the greatest campaign gimmick that ever was. We got them out, and then we sat and waited and we waited and waited. We couldn't figure out why there was such a dribble of them coming back in. We figured it would take maybe thirty days for somebody to fill one of them. We knew that a lot of people would just go get twenty dimes--it was twenty dimes per two-dollar card--and put them on just for the fun of it.

The system was that you put your name and return address on the envelope, but you also wrote your name and address on the space on the card, so that when you sent the card in, filled, we immediately

Hitt: sent back an empty one, to start over again, so it was a continuing thing. Oftentimes we would send back two and say, "Give one to a friend."

But anyway, the gist of the thing was that at the end of thirty days, we had received very, very few of these cards, just a dribble of them. We couldn't figure it out, so we started contacting our state chairmen and some of our women around the county and said, "What do you think is the problem?" They said, "Well, I know that they're being used. Every place I go, people are enthusiastic. I know they're being used and I know they're being mailed to you. There's something going wrong." It was a long time before we figured it out.

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Hitt: We thought okay, we've got an awful lot of money in these and there's something wrong. We had a list of everybody that we had mailed to, which was our only record of who had them. We got out a mimeographed notice with a little tear-off sheet at the bottom, explaining to them that we didn't understand, something had gone wrong, that we weren't hounding them in any way, but if they had filled one of these cards and mailed it back to us, would they please check the tear-off and send it back to us.

We learned that we should have had thousands of them, people had returned them. Now, there's no reason to doubt the people, or think that anybody was lying to us. So we knew something was wrong then. We asked our state chairmen in the various areas to start checking with their local post offices: had they been receiving them, did they remember seeing these envelopes? Yes, they did. They remembered they'd had them and that they had gone on.

We finally tracked it down. The problem was in the Washington post office. For postal employees, you see--they [the cards] were identifiable. You see this thing. It comes back in an envelope. You could feel the dimes in there.

They were getting to the Washington post office, but never getting out of there except in a few little dribbles. So then we thought well, we'll try to do something so that we could trace it. Then we began enclosing with each folder that went out a return postcard with our postage guaranteed on it addressed to us, and on the back was a place for them to put in their name and address, when they mailed it and from what post office. At the time they dropped [the card] in, they also dropped the postcard. The cards began coming in. Then we went to the DC post office, but they weren't satisfied. We said, "Look, here they are." "Well, how do you know?" So we finally abandoned the idea, because literally thousands of dollars in dimes were going to DC postal employees' pockets.

Stein: Did you ever find out how the March of Dimes handled that problem?

Hitt: No. By that time we were well into the campaign and I never did. The only thing I can think of is that maybe people would be more reluctant to steal from the March of Dimes than they would from a political campaign.

Stein: Yes, because I don't see how there could be any--

Hitt: The March of Dimes didn't go back into the Washington post office. I don't know where their cards go, but if they went to Warm Springs, Georgia and that post office, there'd be no problem. They may have realized, they may have licked it by having them come back into a small town, a small post office where they'd be traceable or you'd be dealing with honest people.

Then we had a lot of other gimmicks besides the Dimes for Dick.

Stein: There was a broom thing.

Hitt: That was our version of the silent coffee. We did still use that, because many states have never heard of the phantom coffees, even though we used it in California. We didn't use them much in California, but we did do the broom gimmick, which was another version of it. That was a mimeographed sheet that we sent out, and then asked people to send to their friends. We used that distribution system always. We'd send several thousand to the state chairman. The other people, we'd send them ten and say, "Would you give these to ten friends?"

What it was: "The cost of a broom is approximately two dollars," the idea being that we wanted to sweep the Capitol clean; we wanted to sweep Washington clean. "Will you be willing to invest the price of a new broom." It had a broom drawing on it. It was all decorated with stuff like that. That was just another gimmick: "Don't send us the broom, send us the two dollars."

They were all good fundraisers, because we raised well over a half-million dollars, on little dollar gimmicks. The broom was the most expensive thing, and that was two dollars. We debated for a long time as to whether to make it a dollar or not, and then we finally decided that given the times and everything else, that a dollar broom would not be credible [laughter], and people would be saying, "Well, here's my whisk broom. I'll send you fifty cents," or something like that. So we decided that if we were going to do it, we'd better keep it authentic.

Stein: A dollar broom wouldn't clean anything, let alone Washington.

Hitt: No.

Stein: There was also something in the scrapbooks about a Nixon dress.

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: Was that a fundraising device or just a campaign device?

Hitt: It was both. We made a little off of it, maybe a dollar a dress. It was more an eye-catcher. I stumbled on to this one in the Wisconsin primary. During the Wisconsin primary, I made contact with a young woman who had a small shop where she made gimmicky things for county fairs and for organizations. I sent her the logo, and we agreed that she would put these dresses into production on order. She couldn't stock up a whole lot, and we didn't have the funds to buy a whole lot. We had already invested quite a lot in the red, white and blue umbrellas that we sold everywhere, the Nixon umbrellas.

Stein: What were those?

Hitt: They were just red, white and blue umbrellas that were really a knockout that we sold at the convention. They were one panel white and the next one blue and the next one red and it carried the logo.

The badge of leadership, so to speak, in the Women for Nixon-Agnew were bright shiny red vinyl briefcases. That started because my own briefcase was bright red, a large bright red briefcase, that I carried all the way through the campaign. It was identified with me. It was a large one, a real honest-to-goodness briefcase, but it was patent leather. That caused such a sensation that I thought others would love one.

Before the convention, we contacted a manufacturer that made inexpensive zip-up ones that are soft top and bottom, about so big [gestures] with a handle. They come in all different colors and patterns.

Stein: About two feet by eighteen inches?

Hitt: Yes, but it's not really a briefcase. It is, but it's the soft-pack kind. We worked it out with him so he would produce those in bright red for us with the Women for Nixon logo on them. That was the campaign's or my gift to the chairmen. As soon as the state chairman was named, along with her other materials, she got her bright red briefcase. She carried it with her everywhere; it was a good campaign gimmick.

Hitt: Later on, there was so much desire for them at the convention that we gave them to women participating in various ways, other than just state chairmen. I digress. Now what did I digress from?

Stein: The umbrellas.

Hitt: Those had the little Nixon logo on them too. But I digress from something to get--?

Stein: The dresses?

Hitt: The dresses. Then we got out flyers saying that the dresses were available, if anybody wanted to order them. They were straight shifts, but they were done with a red, white and blue logo. There were an awful lot of them sold. I think they ran--oh, I don't remember. It'd be on the brochure, probably.

Stein: \$12.95

Hitt: They were very moderately priced, but they were cute shifts. They were suitable for anybody. Anybody could wear them, no matter what your size. An awful lot of the headquarters would buy three or four, and the gals would wear them when they were in there. They were a big thing. Maybe we made a dollar off them, but it was not necessarily a fundraising thing, but more an attention-getter.

Stein: Now one of the things that the newspaper said about the advisory committee, I believe, was that one of its functions would be that in the event of a Nixon victory, they would be called on to recommend women for appointments in top-level jobs.

Hitt: That's a myth, a misrepresentation. That was never what they were really organized for. The idea was that if you put together a large group of women, when it comes time to look for women appointees, certainly this is going to identify some obvious ones out of that group. That advisory group was made up of women from all fields and interests. But one of the major parts of it was presidents of state and national women's organizations, the women's auxiliary of the American Medical Association, the AAUW [American Association of University Women], the National Association of Colored Women, Soroptimists, Altrusa--the big national women's organizations.

Well, in almost every case, sitting presidents are not allowed to make primary endorsements, for a very good reason. Political. They're non-political, non-partisan groups. However, immediate past state presidents are free agents and can. It was our thinking--and I believe rightly so--that those women who were immediate past presidents or on a state or a national or a county level had a great deal of influence with the women within their organization. They

Hitt: were respected women. We went after those and had a lot of them. The idea being then after Nixon's election, if we were trying to locate or trying to identify outstanding women for governmental positions, we would have a source to go to, either to draw from or identify. But it was not organized with the idea that women would advise the president. There's a difference there. The newspapers picked up that they would be advising.

The first time it happened, I thought, "How are you going to clarify?" There was no point. You couldn't spend the rest of the campaign saying, "It's not that, it's something else." So we just let it go. It is true that after it was over, there were a few women who expected to be on some kind of commission that the president was going to have to advise him on women's interests, which never happened. There were some that were a little disillusioned, but you had to face the risk of that, vis à vis how in the world are you going to clarify it if it's said wrong one time. It was a nit-picky thing.

As a matter of fact, a lot of those women did end up on advisory committees and commissions. I would say that probably there were at least a hundred to a hundred and fifty women who were named to advisory committees or commissions who had served either on the national or state level. When they would come to me and say, "Look, we want some women to serve on this or that advisory committee, all I had to do was go right to my files or ask my confidential assistant, Jean Hawkins, who had been my executive secretary in the campaign. When we were at HEW, I'd call Jean and we'd look through the files, when I'd have a request for someone from such-and-such a state, for a geographic balance or something else. We could almost always send the names of several and the background and let them make their choice.

Stein: Who was this assistant?

Hitt: Jean Hawkins. She was the first person that I hired when I went to Washington. She became the executive director, really, of the Women for Nixon, my executive assistant. I was on the road. She ran the operation in the office, and then she was so fantastic that when I went to HEW I talked her into going there with me as my confidential assistant.

Stein: Was she the one who did research for you?

Hitt: No, that was someone else. That was Jodie Baldwin. I hired her off the Hill [Capitol Hill]. Came time for that, I thought, the best person I can get is a woman who's worked for a congressman or worked on the Hill on one of the congressional committees, because they know how to go about it. They know where the things are, how to do it. She had been research and speech writer for one of the Republican Senators, who was notorious for paying cheap wages. [Laughter] So I got her.

Stein: One of the things that one of the clippings mentioned was a card file that you kept. I thought that sounded unique. It said in order for you to meet the needs of speaking all over the country when you might be called upon to comment on Nixon's position on some issue, that you had worked out this system of summarizing his position papers.

Hitt: Yes, we did. In the first place, I was traveling so much and it was just not feasible for me to carry a lot of books and thick papers and reports, a lot of detailed position papers. But at the same time, I had to always know or be able to put my fingers on it before I left the city. If I didn't know, I could say to the press or anybody else, "I don't know, but I'll get the answer for you." I had to be able to do that before I left, so that I could get back with the answer.

Jody did work out this system, whereby we would put a condensation on three-by-five cards in a card file. We did the same thing also by states. If there was an issue that was particularly important in a given state, we kept a record of that, what's of the greatest interest to the people in that state. If I were going for example into Michigan, I knew what the polls had shown to be the most critical issues in Michigan, so I could study up on those.

Then all we had to do, you see, was to pull the cards out of that file, and put them on a Xerox machine. We could run off a sheet that had twelve of them on it, if I wanted to carry that. I sometimes carried the cards, but I could have the equivalent of twelve cards on one sheet of paper, which I could carry easily. Otherwise, I'd be loaded down. We just did a digest of it.

That way, if I didn't have the answer, at least I'd know where it came from and I could call Jean or Jody at the office and say, "Look, give me the rest of this. What is it? Get it on the teletype, or get it on something at the headquarters and we'll get it to whoever wants it."

Stein: There was a report in volume two, I think, over here. Here's the scrapbook. [Goes to fetch scrapbook] I don't know if anything in here needs to be commented on, but it looked like it was your final campaign report. Here it is.

Hitt: To Nixon, and I saved that one sheet.

Stein: Well, I think the whole thing is here, actually.

Hitt: Yes, but there's one sheet exposed--

Stein: That's right. [Leafs through report]

Hitt: --with his comments on it, and a note saying, "Save this for me," because that's R. N.'s own writing.

Stein: "What a great efficient job"--that note?

Hitt: Yes. This was the report that I sent to him of all of our activities, money raised, and recommendations for the next time. One of the recommendations that I made was that I thought that this mechanism was excellent, but could have done an even better job with better financing, more heavily financed, that if anything like the money that was spent on Citizens for Nixon-Eisenhower got spent on this operation, we'd have had a great deal more return from it. This was a recommendation that I sent to him, and kept the Xerox.

I had sent this to Rose. [November 22, 1968. Memorandum to President-elect Nixon] The original, you see--these were checked in red that I particularly wanted him to see. But he got the original. I kept the Xerox. This was the note that came back. His remarks were number one, "a great and efficient job," and number two, "I agree. There should have been a larger budget." I saved that because it was his handwriting and his comment.

Stein: I wondered if there was anything else in here that might spark a memory.

Hitt: Well, let me look at it. That listed everything we did and all the gimmicks, if I've forgotten any. There's some interesting figures regarding the size of the operation. These are not plumped-up figures. I've never been one for blowing up anything. Who are you kidding, you know. But this was on recruiting volunteers. We had five thousand working Women for Nixon-Agnew chairman on all levels. That meant there were five thousand, literally five thousand--now, it could have been 4,999 or it could have been 5,003--but there were literally five thousand women who carried, actually carried the title of a Women for Nixon chairman on some level and were really working at it all across the country.

Stein: That's a hundred in each state.

Hitt: Yes. Of course, some states have more. In California, we had several hundred because it's a bigger state and there are many cities, and there were divisions and there were Women for Nixon chairmen from the federation, Women for Nixon chairmen from the community and so on. An additional fourteen thousand women were actively involved in sub-chairman levels. There's no way of calculating how many women participated without title designation on the local level in the program headquarters work and so on.

Hitt: I broke it down for him as to the amounts of money raised from the various states and from the federation contributions. Oh, as we had in the Murphy and in the Finch campaigns, we did have our own buttons. [Referring to photo in scrapbook] There was a campaign logo. This is the Women for Nixon campaign logo that was done in red, white and blue. The regular campaign had a logo, but we insisted, and got our own. It was slightly different, but it identified us; anything that carried this meant that it was the women. That had a great impact on the women, that here they not only had this organization, but they had their own letterheads.

Our Women for Nixon Advisory Committee, the national advisory committee, had printed up for each member a couple of dozen sheets that carried the Women for Nixon-Agnew committee, and then had their names on it, for their use. So it identified. There were little things that made them important and personalized.

We had the ordinary kind of campaign buttons, the round Women for Nixon button. Then we also had--I worked out with a jeweler a special one that had pearls. Pearls were big then, and very eye-catching. Nothing had ever been done like this before. Campaign jewelry that was jeweled was always done in gaudy rhinestones, red, white and blue, this awful gaudy, heavy stuff which I couldn't stand, and wouldn't be caught dead wearing. I saw no reason why we couldn't have a very elegant-looking kind of thing that would not be gaudy.

So we worked it out, and actually it was quite handsome. I had some of them around here someplace. I can describe it. It was a little like a bar, about this long and about this high. [Gestures]

Stein: About an inch long and about half an inch high.

Hitt: Yes. It spelled out Nixon across here, and all of those letters were in a gold metal. Then the letters were all filled in with seed pearls. It was small and unobtrusive, and really was quite an elegant-looking thing.

Then we had another one which was done into earrings and also done for a tie-tack, which was a small gold oval encircled in seed pearls, the back in a florentine finish, and just a plain gold N on top of it. Those we sold. They were good sellers. As a matter of fact, I'm sure that there are pictures of them. Probably there would be pictures in here someplace where I have one on, because I wore them all the time.

Stein: I think that there were. Unfortunately, they were fairly small.

Hitt: We also had the red, white, and blue enamel buttons with our logo. I can't remember what I had on, the photo with Mamie [Eisenhower]. Is that in this book?

Stein: I'll just look quickly through here and see what we have. [Leafs through scrapbook] Here's the pearl pin.

Hitt: There it is. That's "Nixon" spelled out in pearls. She's got one on too.

Stein: Is that the round pin?

Hitt: No, this was something else. I don't remember what. That was something that was given to me, probably a state insignia. You know, every place I went they gave me something or other.

Stein: [Referring to photo in scrapbook] And these are the briefcases?

Hitt: These are the briefcases, bright red briefcases.

Stein: They have handles on them.

Hitt: Yes. They were light briefcases, except that they were soft packs and slightly smaller than mine.

Stein: Here's Mamie Eisenhower with a Nixon--

Hitt: It was a radical departure from the usual campaign jewelry. As such, they really grabbed it. [Indicates photos] Those were all taken in Massachusetts and Boston. That's Peggy Heckler, a congresswoman.

Then we put out a monthly newsletter for all of our Women for Nixon to tell them what was going on in the campaign.

Stein: Here's the Nixon dress.

Hitt: Here's our logo and our letterhead. I don't know whether there's a copy of our Women for Nixon newsletter in here or not.

Stein: There was a little Nixon newspaper, and I can't remember--

Hitt: That probably was the campaign--well, it might have been either one.

Stein: The Observer.

Hitt: I've got to dig all these things out of files someday and get them together out of dresser drawers.

Stein: I think it's in the other scrapbook.

Hitt: Virginia Cunningham, a gal there in Washington who had been a professional writer, was our newsletter editor. She'd done the newsletter for the National Dairy Association and volunteered. She

Hitt: did a great job. We put that out monthly and it went to all of our Women for Nixon chairmen all over, giving them the latest appointments that had been made, the latest developments, how many we now had, what was coming on and so on.

It was an attempt to make them feel like--you know, if they were in Pierre, South Dakota, they felt like they were a part of everything that was going on. We had complete campaign kits of our own for everything. There was lots of how-to's and suggestions as to what to do.

Stein: And you prepared those?

Hitt: Yes. I see we had a six hundred thousand printing of a Why Women for Nixon-Agnew? brochure. It was a brochure that pointed out why women should be interested in Nixon. We had our own bumper strips and our own decals and get-out-the-vote cards.

While it was really a conglomeration, there were some new things and a lot of things that we'd done in the Murphy and the Finch campaigns in California, which were not new to us. Some of the things we didn't really use in California, because they'd been used in two other campaigns. The Operation Broom was new, the Dimes for Dick were new. We more or less concentrated on California with that kind of thing.

As I said, a lot of it had been done before. It was the first time that it had ever been done on a national level, and the first time it had ever been done in any state but California. So it was all new, all across the country. It just caught on like wildfire and people were excited! California women were used to it, but other states--they'd never done it.

So all of this identification, our own things, and our props and our small fundraising gimmicks, they were enthusiastically received everywhere. It was a whole new thing. And it was fun.

Stein: [Indicates newspaper clipping] This was one of the other things that I found in your file. It must have been cut out of a newspaper. It's a letter to you from Mildred Mead.

Hitt: Yes. That's a local, probably a Newport Beach letter or something. Mildred was a neighbor in San Marino. I've known her through the years. She writes for some local papers once in awhile, kind of gossipy things, mostly on fashion. She's a fashion coordinator. This is where she was writing up for some paper, and sent it to me, about a party that Georgia Bullock gave for me at the Bistro.

Stein: I was interested that she said at the beginning of the letter that she and you had pushed baby carriages together on Wellesley Road.

Hitt: In San Marino, yes.

Stein: One of the other things that was in your 1968 folder was this and I wasn't quite sure what its significance was. [Indicates sample ballot from Alabama]

Hitt: As a Californian, I was stunned when I hit the southern states the first time and saw their ballots. Not only their multiparty system-- I sent it back to Jean Hawkins to save it [unfolds paper]--not only the multiparty system, but the fact that they vote by symbols. I don't remember whether this was Mississippi.

Stein: This is Alabama.

Hitt: This is true all over the [southern] states. I'd never seen it. I was just astounded. So many different parties; of course, most of them are Democrat. I don't know whether you could say it was illiteracy or voter consciousness or what that was so bad, that people didn't know what a party was by written name. They identified it by the rooster party, or the camel party or the dove party, or something like that. That's the way they explain it. A lot of the people can't read or they don't know what the party is, but they've learned to recognize the symbols for it, and that's the way they vote. It's just kind of incredible. It also means that they don't know the people they're voting for either.

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Hitt: The deep southern states are so backward that many people literally cannot read. They obviously don't know who they're voting for. Somebody has gone to them and said, "Vote for the rooster, or vote for this or that symbol, and so they go in to vote, look at the rooster and they check it right straight down the column.

Stein: Is there anything more we should say about the '68 campaign or anyone else who worked in it?

Hitt: I really don't know what. You know, there's the basic thing. There were an awful lot of people involved. It was a very successful operation. And we won it.

Stein: What did your husband do? You said that he was given a job in the campaign.

Hitt: He was the administrator for the Washington D.C. headquarters. He did the payroll, the books, the accounting, ran the headquarters operation, because we had a headquarters there of oh, twenty-five,

Hitt: thirty, forty staff. He was the office manager. He was responsible for the funds and all bookkeeping and all accounts and everything like that, any supplies, any orders, as it came into Washington or as it was dispersed. He ran the mechanics of the entire operation, whether it was the women or whether it was the Washington campaign headquarters, whether it was something I was doing, or whether it was Ellsworth, and continued to do that all the way through the campaign.

In January, when we decided to stay back there, he became the executive director under Rog [Rogers Morton], at the Republican National Committee.



President Richard Nixon congratulates Patricia Hitt after she was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. 1969



Assistant HEW Secretary Patricia Hitt on a visit to a San Francisco Head Start school, 1972.

IV ASSISTANT SECRETARY, FIELD SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, 1969-1972

The Appointment

Stein: Well, after the election, I noticed in some of the clippings in your scrapbook, there was some speculation that you would be appointed secretary of HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare].

Hitt: To the cabinet, yes. There always is. It started before the election. It started during the campaign. I was the visible woman and for some reason or other, they seemed to think that HEW was the place for a woman. So there was speculation in Newsweek, in many things.

Stein: Yes, it was Newsweek.

Hitt: I knew that it was never going to happen. I didn't want it, for one thing, and I just knew that it wasn't going to happen. I didn't have the background. I couldn't have run that department or any other department. I didn't want to. I knew that it would have been ridiculous for me. At that point, when all this was happening, I didn't even expect to be a part of the administration. I was coming home. I was back there for the campaign, and I wanted no more than that. I didn't expect or intend to stay on in government at all in any form. While I knew that even if it were offered I wouldn't take it, and there was virtually no chance it was going to be offered, it would have been ridiculous, in the middle of a campaign, for me to have said this. It would have been the worst kind of campaign strategy. So I just let it go.

Stein: When did you first know that you were being considered for a federal position after the election?

Hitt: Well, I think I knew all the way through the campaign that that's what Richard Nixon had in mind, that I was to stay on, but I had repeatedly said no. I even had a bet with the Washington press women,



Nixon Block Worker Rises to Administration's No. 1 Woman

BY MARLENE CIMONS
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—Patricia Hitt sometimes likes to tell people she worked her sphere of influence up from one street block to 30 states and three territories. "But I did come up through the ranks," she said, laughing.

Patricia Reilly Hitt, 41, is considered by many as the highest-ranking woman in the Nixon Administration. She is the assistant secretary for community and field services for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and it all began in 1946 when she rang doorbells

SUNDAY NOV 9 1969

"I was a block worker for Nixon's first congressional campaign," she said. "It was sort of a personal thing then because he came from Whittier and so did I. But I've been involved in every political campaign since."

She went from block worker that year to national co-chairman of Nixon's presidential campaign last year because she wanted to become involved—and also because she believes very strongly that women should become involved in activities outside the home. If not politics, then something else.

"I think it's important for women to express themselves and use their talents and I think it's important for the nation to use them," she said. "Women have a great deal to offer and today they have the time and the desire."

The opportunity comes, she said, mostly from new labor-saving devices which enable women to spend less time taking care of the home. "I think that women were emanci-

pated more by electricity than by suffrage," she said.

Her own career developed from community service.

"At the time my children were little, my leisure time was taken up with things that concerned my boys," she said, "like PTA, Cub Scouts, Little League, camping trips. As my boys got older, my political activities picked up. Finally, when my youngest was in junior high school, he came home one day and—in a nice way so as to not hurt my feelings—said, 'Mother, do you really feel you need to be around school so much?' I knew then that the time had come to channel my energies elsewhere."

She is short and slim with dark, silver-streaked hair, very outgoing and talkative. She feels that women who get involved outside the home do not lose either their femininity or their responsibility towards their home.

"It depends totally on the woman," she said. "But in most cases, if a woman can't manage her time and doesn't care enough to make the effort, her family will suffer anyway. A woman who is committed to the needs of her family will meet those needs and do a good job no matter what."

The contributions of qualified women are invaluable, she said. "When a

woman's viewpoint and abilities aren't used," she said, smiling, "the whole operation suffers."

Mrs. Hitt said she had the complete backing of her husband Robert and her two sons, John, 27, and Rick, 23, before she accepted the new post.

"I couldn't have taken it without their support," she said. "In fact, my husband was the one who decided I should."

"I was having second thoughts about leaving California—I'm a third-generation Californian and sometimes I get terribly homesick—and I had never considered government employment. But he

said to take it. And I love my job. It's exciting, and challenging, and rewarding. And I've never worked so hard in my life."

She said she spends a minimum of 14 hours a day, six days a week in her large, blue-carpeted fifth floor office (which she calls "very Californian with its bamboo and rattan conference chairs") and she works part-time on Sundays at home. She also brings several hours of work home each week night. But her husband, who is executive director of the Republican National Committee, doesn't seem to mind.

"He works the same kind of hours during the week so he understands," she said. "In the evening, he doesn't care what I'm doing—as long as we're both in the same room. So I've learned to work while the television's going."

L.A. TIMES

NOVEMBER 9, 1969

Hitt: three of them, that I wouldn't. I had a twenty dollar bet. They bet me twenty dollars that I would, and I said, "I'll take that. Twenty dollars I won't!" This was in October or November. Sure, I knew that was in the back of his mind, but I had said no constantly. I didn't want to.

Finally, in December, Finch--he had his choice of any cabinet position, and HEW's the one that he wanted--he said, "Oh, come on. Come on to HEW. I think that's a spot for you. There's a place there I think you'd enjoy. You'd like to do it."

Really, again Bob Hitt was the one that turned the tables, because during all this I was saying no, no, no. Finally, we were back here in California. We hadn't moved home; we'd come home for a vacation and we were going to go back and move after Christmas. He finally said, "Look, you've put how many years of your life in this man? You've just put a year of life and work into getting him elected. Aren't you going to be a part of it now that it's happened? I think you should. Just for a year or two."

So then I got hold of Bob [Finch] and said, "Okay, let's go, but it's got to be understood it's only for a year or two." Well, of course, when I got into it I realized that it takes a whole year to know what it's all about, what you're doing, to get aboard even. It really is the end of the second year before you really function with the degree of effectiveness that you want to, so I stayed there four years, but did not stay on in the second Nixon term.

Leaving HEW

Hitt: You'll find when you get into '73, you'll find a lot of articles and conjectures about my heading up ACTION, my doing this or my doing that, and then coming home.

Stein: That's right.

Hitt: That was kind of a strange thing. I had served at HEW under Finch, and served then under [Elliot] Richardson, who was magnificent. It was a very, very happy situation with both. I'd had the opportunity to build that field organization from being the pasture for all the incompetents. You know, you couldn't fire them, they were civil service. They couldn't fire them, so they'd transfer them to the field offices; get them out to pasture.

Well, that's not the way it should have been. The field offices should have been the primary point of contact. We should have offered the best we had to offer in those field offices, so that

Hitt: people didn't have to try to run to Washington for everything. In four years, I did have the opportunity to build those field offices until they were a primary contact. They were the best field offices in the federal government.

I got along fine with Finch, of course, naturally. Then Richardson came along and there was no problem. I'd known Elliot before. He and Ann are in some of those '68 pictures in Boston. But I had known him even before that. There was no transition to be made. We were good friends; we had great mutual respect for each other. Elliott was very supportive of what I was trying to do. It was a difficult thing in that department, because the agency heads in Washington did not want to give up any perogatives or any of the power to the men in the field to make decisions. It had been a hard battle.

It could only have been accomplished with the total support of the secretary. They had to know--he backed me up one hundred percent--"Look, if you're really going to tangle with her, you're going to tangle with the secretary. Take your choice." So that had been great.

When Elliot left, when Nixon asked him to go over to [the] Defense [Department], and he left HEW, Cap Weinberger came in. I knew this wasn't going to work very well, simply because I'd worked for two bosses, and at that point, I really didn't want to get used to a third. I knew this was going to be a radical change.

Stein: Why?

Hitt: Well, Cap was much more conservative in many ways. In his early years, he wasn't. He was a Young Turk. Cap was very pro-Reagan. He was back there to watch out for Reagan interests to a great extent. Now he would deny it. If you do interview Cap, and you discuss it, you're going to get a vastly different side of this thing from Cap Weinberger than you are from me.

When he took over, Cap called. He caught me at Thanksgiving. I was out here, and he caught me on the phone and said, "Pat, I sure want you to stay on." I said, "Fine, Cap. I will for a while. I'll help you through a transition. I'll do anything I can do to help, but I really want to come home sometime next year. Four years is enough. But yes, I will."

Then shortly after the first of the year, I heard via the HEW grapevine that there were a number of conferences going on, and that Cap was going to totally reorganize my operation, the whole field operation and the department. I thought, this is strange that there'd be something like this going on, and he wouldn't have said something to me--my God, I'd known Cap for years! I really couldn't believe it.

Hitt: Finally, it got to the point where there was just no not-believing it. Frank Carlucci, the undersecretary, wanted the field under him, because let's face it, the field was where the action was. That was the excitement. It had been built up to where it really was a strong viable operation. Carlucci had seen it in operation, and the disaster it had been, before he was ever at HEW. He wanted it.

For two years, I had been advocating the HEW go to the same type of organization that Defense and some of the other departments had, with two undersecretaries. That there should be an undersecretary, which was the alter ego of the secretary, and the generalist, and that there should also be an undersecretary for field operations. I said it doesn't matter if it's me or who it is, but the field operations should be under the level of undersecretary, but not along with everything else that the undersecretary, the number two man at HEW, has.

They need one person that does nothing else but run that operation and watch out for it. There were five thousand employees in it, you see, either directly or indirectly reporting to me. I was also doing a half a dozen other things besides the field. The field was the biggest part of my operation, but I also had the youth and student affairs, the consumers, the mental retardation, the interdepartmental liaison with HUD on model cities and our departmental liaison with labor on model cities and job education, and half a dozen others.

As a matter of fact, it was my recommendation that they create an assistant secretary for human development and put all these other things under this, and some bits and pieces around the department, and move the whole field operation to the undersecretary for field operations. I had made this as a formal recommendation to Elliot Richardson in an annual report a year or more before as the way I thought the thing should be run from the standpoint of the field, but not with myself in mind, because that was not my intention.

Then I thought, well, it's damned funny that all of this is going on. What had happened was that Carlucci wanted that field operation under him. There was no way in God's world that he could do the job of that and everything else that falls to the undersecretary. I finally went to Cap and said, "Cap, what's this I hear? Is it true?" and he said, "Well, yes, as a matter of fact it is. I want you to take the assistant secretary of human development." I said, "No, thank you," because they were putting funding programs in.

I said, "Cap, I'm not the least bit interested in getting into a funding program. The field is my thing. I either want the field or I'm simply not interested." "Oh, it's going to be great," it's

Hitt: going to be this or that, and I said, "No way!" Well, I think it's one of the few times probably in his life that anybody had ever said no to Cap and he wouldn't believe it.

This went on for a couple of months. In the meantime, the whole thing proceeded and it got to the point where it was in the works to abolish the assistant secretary for community and field development. By that time, I thought, "Well, if I'm going to do this, I'm going to leave now." By that time, there was no way that I could work for Cap Weinberger. Absolutely no way at all! Anybody who would reorganize something that had been made into a very major asset--I could never trust him. I couldn't have worked with him either.

There was just something radically wrong there. I didn't like Carlucci either, the undersecretary. I didn't like the manner in which he had handled the whole thing. Half the department knew before I did. That's an untenable position.

I thought, "Okay, this is it. There's no way I'm going to work for Cap Weinberger. Just no way at all." Then I thought, let's face it, I wasn't appointed by Cap Weinberger and I wasn't appointed by Finch or by Richardson. I was appointed by the president. I guessed I'd jolly well better trot my little self over and tell him that the resignation was in the offing, and why.

I called, made an appointment, went over and talked to him about it, and just said, "I'm going to be leaving, and I suddenly realized that I really should have told you before anyone else." He said, "Why? What's the problem?" I told him. I said, "For one thing, I don't think I could work with Cap. Our philosophies in relation to people are too totally different." He had achieved a reputation at OMB [Office of Management and Budget] of having an adding machine for a heart, which carried over into the department. It was a disaster. There were half a dozen places he could have gone that would have been better. The department was in a turmoil.

They were choosing up sides. I'd been there a long time, and he was an unknown and nobody was happy with the appointment. It was rapidly reaching the point where I could see that I was going to become a cause. There was no way we could have that happen, or would I.

I told him what had happened, and he said, "Well, for Christ's sake. I didn't know anything about this." He said, "Hold on a minute," and he called John Ehrlichman and he said, "John, do you know anything about this?" John said, "No." He said, "Well, you find out. You look into it."

Hitt: By the time John got into it, talked to Cap and looked into it, it had gone so far that there was no way on earth that the president could pull the rug out from under his newly-appointed secretary, in front of HEW and everybody else. He would have had his resignation, and it couldn't have happened.

He said, "Let's take a look at something else. I don't want you to leave." At that time, I had no idea what was going on.* I didn't know anything about it. Sure, I knew that there'd been a break-in. I didn't know any more than I read in the papers. A lot of people thought due to my timing, that I knew about that thing and I was getting out.

Stein: You were clearing out.

Hitt: I was clearing out or I was turned off, I was disgusted. It wasn't that at all. I was homesick. I wanted to come home. I didn't want to work with Cap Weinberger. So anyway, he said, "Just cool it. Don't write that letter. I don't want to get that letter for a while. Let's see what works out." So he put Ehrlichman on it.

Ehrlichman's next step was to come back and say, "Pat, how would you like to go to the State Department? There's an assistant secretaryship in public affairs in the State Department," which was a more prestigious position, because the department was more prestigious than HEW. "How about it? Will you go on over there?"

I wasn't being stubborn. I've got the copy of a letter I wrote back to him, and I said, "My whole life has been spent in domestic affairs. At this point, I don't want to learn a whole new thing." The job would have put me on the road traveling all over the world all the time. It would have meant hardly ever seeing my husband. From the traveling standpoint, it would have been exciting. As it turned out, thank God I didn't do it, because I would have been traveling all over the world apologizing or trying to explain away what came into public view a couple of months, three months later.

Anyway, I said, "No, I really am not interested in State. I said, "Remember too, I don't know Henry Kissinger that well. What I know of him, he's got a monstrous ego." [Laughter] "I don't think that I could--let's face it, John, I'm spoiled! I served on an equal basis with everybody else in the department. I've had instant access to the secretary. I'm not going to step into a situation where I spend a month hopefully trying to talk to the Secretary of State, Kissinger, on the telephone. No way! It's just not my thing."

*This is a reference to the Watergate scandal, which began with a Committee-to-Re-elect-the-President-sponsored break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Hitt: That's when heading up the ACTION agency, which you'll run across, developed. Then the president called back himself and said, "Pat, I think we've got a better solution. You've always done volunteer work. You're interested." Two of the programs that were in ACTION had been at HEW at one time, two senior citizens' programs. He said, "What about ACTION?"

No, Ehrlichman was the one that brought it up first, I guess. It doesn't matter, anyway. I said, "Well, I don't know. I'd have to think about it." It would have been a big step up. I'd have been heading up my own agency on virtually a cabinet level, and a very free hand, the Peace Corps and everything else. But at the same time, I knew that Richard Nixon had never thought very kindly of the Peace Corps. He didn't so much disagree with the concept but the Peace Corps, if you remember, was something that was kind of born out of the thin blue in an airplane by Kennedy during the 1960 campaign. It was a gimmick, really, to begin with.

Then it did develop. In some parts of the world it was very successful. In some parts it wasn't. But for that reason, the Peace Corps was never highly regarded in the Nixon administration. Some of the other parts of ACTION were.

That was when Ehrlichman first called, so I said to John, "Well, maybe that's a possibility. Let me think it over, but I would have some reservations, knowing his Peace Corps attitude."

I thought it over and I said, "Well, okay. But I tell you what. I want to talk to the president about it. I do have some reservations. I do have to get some things cleared up at this point." So then I went over, and I talked to him. I said, "I know how you feel about the Peace Corps. But I think that the Peace Corps is a viable operation. I think it's been done wrong." I said, "Our problems in the Peace Corps have been in Africa and in the Mideast and in some of those areas. I think that the Peace Corps has been very, very successful in South and Central America. I think the Peace Corps should be preserved, but I think its focus should be concentrated on South and Central America. I think we should gradually pull back in these other areas where it's not successful and let's go with it on a bigger scale in those areas where it is very successful."

"Above all, I wouldn't want to be a part of its demise or it being phased out." I had heard also that there were serious considerations of even phasing it out.

So he said, "Well, let's think about it. You know how I feel. Let's think about that one." So I went back. At that point, I really thought that I was going to go there. As a matter of fact, there'd been so much publicity on it, and I was so confident, that

Hitt: for two or three weeks, there was a steady stream over at HEW of the young echelon, but on a reasonably high level, that wanted to go with me. My own staff, yes! They wanted to go part and parcel with me. But it was the strangest thing, because it was something that I was never aware of before.

I had been under the eye of an awful lot of young men and young women in deputy levels throughout that department. They were just itching. Somebody had said to me one time, "You know, everybody in this department wants to be in your operation," but I really didn't pay that much attention to it. I thought, "Well, it's the field that's exciting." Anyway, in comes this stream of people. Every day two or three of them; they didn't want to stay with Weinberger. They didn't want to stay at HEW. They wanted to know, "Pat, if you go can I go?"

I had reached the point where I thought okay, this really is going to be, and I am going to do it. Then at some point, and I don't know where or when it was, I got a call from Ehrlichman. He said, "Pat, we've got problems on ACTION. You'd better come on over. I want to talk to you about it." So I went on over and he said, "I'm just as embarrassed as I can be. The president's embarrassed. That's why he asked me to call you. I don't really know exactly what we're going to do about this thing. Chuck Colson has made a commitment to somebody for that job. He thinks that he had the okay. The president doesn't remember anything being said, but Colson thinks he had his okay.

"He's already made a commitment to somebody in Boston for this job. I don't know what we're going to do." I said, "Well, I'm not going to sit here and turn the White House staff upside down on this thing. Don't pit me against Chuck Colson." For one thing, I didn't like him. I had no use for him. I said, "Look, I don't want anything that he's had any part of. I know that guy. If I say, 'Yes, I want it,' and hang to it, and the president or you or somebody else is put in the position where they have to say to Chuck Colson, 'Back away, it's going to Pat Hitt,' that guy will make my life miserable."

Stein: When did you know him from?

Hitt: Just from the time that he was at the White House. I said, "Let's forget the whole cockeyed thing. I really want to go home anyway." So that's what happened. That's the way it happened. Colson had it all picked out, a nice little plum for somebody that he wanted to do something for.

Stein: And that's who got it?

Hitt: Yes. But there was no way on earth that I would have wanted any part of it, because I would have been undermined constantly.

Stein: So that certainly was a great stroke of luck too, because you would have been caught there when the roof fell in.

Hitt: That's what we said afterwards. Believe me, at the time it was a bitter disappointment. My staff was heartsick and mad. I wasn't mad, because I knew John Ehrlichman. We'd been friends long enough that I knew he was leveling with me, and I knew he was embarrassed. I wasn't mad, I was disappointed, because by that time I'd geared myself up in my thinking to do it. I had all kinds of plans for it, staffing and programming.

My staff people were bitter. They were not only disappointed, they were angry. They didn't see it the same way. They thought I had been had, where I understood. They thought when I tried to explain it to them that I was being protective of Nixon and Ehrlichman.

Stein: That you were covering it up.

Hitt: I'm sure to this day they haven't changed their minds about it. But anyway, as I said, Bob and I both said afterwards, my God, the guardian angel was over my shoulder! You see, this was all taking place in January and February and March of '73. My letter of resignation went to the president on the first of March, effective April the first, with a copy to Cap Weinberger. So you see, I stayed on till the first of April, giving a thirty day notice, to wind things up and to find places for my staff, find jobs for them and get them placed.

It wasn't but two or three weeks after the first of April that this thing broke. And I didn't know it, didn't know anything about it. But had I stayed, I would have had to stay to the bitter end. I couldn't have stayed for a year. If I hadn't gotten out when I did, I wouldn't have been able to leave until the end. I would have stayed on for Ford if he wanted me to, but I would have been stuck through the whole thing, because if I had resigned and left at any time after that point, everybody would have immediately read Watergate into it. I would have been in a position where I would have been out on the road, defending the president, reassuring everyone that he didn't know what was going on, which I didn't really think he did.

It wasn't until he said himself that he had, that he lied--I was right up to that moment, in private and public conversations saying I know that he didn't know. And I also knew that White House operation well enough to know that it was possible that he didn't. I knew the Haldeman-Ehrlichman operation well enough to know that it was possible that those guys could have given the orders without him knowing it. The whole thing could have gone out without his knowing it. It didn't, but it was possible, knowing the powers they had in the operation, and knowing them.

Stein: I thought President Nixon still says--at least he said on television--that he didn't know about the initial break-in.

Hitt: He didn't beforehand, no.

Stein: He knew about some of the later--

Hitt: Yes. But he had first said that he didn't know anything about it up until such-and-such a date. He later admitted that that was not true, that he did know. I'm certain he didn't know about the break-in ahead of time, because if he had, it wouldn't have happened, because he had sense enough to know-- What in the world were they going to find?

As Rog [Rogers] Morton laughingly said, if they'd broken in when he was chairman, "If they'd broken into the Republican National Committee headquarters, the only thing they'd find out was where Ann and I were going that night for dinner! On my calendar or something."

If you're going to break in and try to find something, you'd go into the campaign headquarters, not the national committee. The whole thing was stupid, utterly stupid. I know that Nixon didn't know ahead of it.

The strangest one of all was Bob Finch. He was sitting there right in the White House and he didn't know! But that was a purposeful thing. He was deliberately kept in the dark. We all know that now.

Stein: Why?

Hitt: Because he would have marched himself into the Oval Office and said, "Now Mr. President, you should know what's going on."

Stein: I see. So everybody else had kept him deliberately out of the line of communication.

Hitt: He was deliberately cut out of everything.

Stein: And he wasn't at all aware that there were things going on around him?

Hitt: Not much, no. Not much more than you read in the paper. That was the reason, because he would have raised a hue and cry. As I said, it was fortunate for me, because I would have been stuck for another two to three years, and the position would have been very, very difficult for me. I would have gone all to pieces if I had been out defending, and suddenly the rug were pulled out from under me, because my own integrity means more to me than almost everything else. I couldn't have taken it, so it was great as it turned out.

Stein: Well, we're about to run out of tape and it's also getting late in the afternoon. This might be a good place to stop. Next time we'll go through the HEW period in a little bit more detail, and just a bit on what you've been doing since then.

Hitt: Fine

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Responsibilities

Stein: Let's move on then to HEW. First of all, let's have a rundown of what your responsibilities were. What was your title?

Hitt: I was assistant secretary for community and field services, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. I was the third-ranking in the department. While there are a number of assistant secretaries--I think there were four or five--the ranking in that department (and others are different) are the secretary, and then the undersecretary, and then the assistant secretaries rank in the order of their appointment, their tenure in office. I was the first one appointed, the first assistant secretary named, so that I then became third-ranking in the department, but not because of the assistant secretaryship I held, but because of my appointment.

As a matter of fact, I think the next one was quite some time, maybe sixty to ninety days, some time afterward.

Mine was a different kind of assistant secretaryship than any other one in the department, quite different. I did no funding. I had no funded programs. Mine was strictly administrative. I had five thousand people who either reported directly or indirectly to me, because I had the field. You'll see that as it develops. But I funded no programs whatever. My budget, for example, was strictly an administrative budget. It was salaries, expenses, office, travel. I can't remember exactly what it was--it would vary from year to year--but I would say that the budget for my operation ran somewhere between forty to sixty million dollars a year. It was all administrative.

Stop me if you don't understand how this worked, because it is so different. I cut across all phases of the department. Where the other assistant secretaries--for example, there was the comptroller

*Tape 9, side A was devoted to clarifying and expanding upon topics covered in Interviews 1 and 2. That portion of the transcript, therefore, has been inserted earlier in the manuscript at points where the information is most relevant.

Hitt: or there'd be assistant secretary for health, the assistant secretary for education, agency heads of FDA, Social Security and so on were more or less specialized in one particular area of the department.

I've often said that I knew a little bit about an awful lot of things. I was expert in none, as far as the department went. The primary responsibility of my office was the ten regional offices. HEW has ten regional offices throughout the country. Those regional directors and their staff and the agency people, the health people, the education people--everybody in those regional offices reported either directly or indirectly to me.

I had the general responsibility for seeing that those regional offices functioned. As a matter of fact, I had replaced, within two years, almost all the regional directors, with the exception of a couple, because there was a whole new focus in the Nixon administration. The focus of the Nixon administration--Finch and Richardson as secretaries--was to put the emphasis in the field, with as much decision-making and policy implementation as possible. It was part of the major decentralization program that was a keystone of the Nixon administration.

Prior to that time, the regional field offices had been pretty sorry, sad conglomerations, because the field had always been the place where if there were incompetents, if there were people who were a little too old but couldn't retire, slightly incompetent, over-the-hill, the field was pasture, literally. That was known all over the department. If they couldn't be fired or gotten rid of, and you had to hang onto them and keep them going, put them out into the field, out to pasture.

Then along came the Nixon administration with the new concept that was diametrically opposed to that. The action, and a great deal of the decision-making, was to be in the field as close to the people as possible. For example, anybody in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Washington could go to San Francisco, rather than everybody having to traipse to Washington.

As a result, there was simply no way that the out-to-pasture people were capable of handling the job. It also gave an enormous amount of influence and impact to those regions, and by the same token, to me. I was the one responsible in Washington for the advocacy for those regions. I was the watchdog over the agencies and the other assistant secretaries and the whole HEW-Washington operations, to keep trying to force them to let their field people make decisions. It was a very, very exciting thing, because we took something that was nothing and built it up.

Hitt: Within three or four years, the other departments all recognized that the HEW regional operation was head and shoulders above everybody else. The other departments were doing it, but not quite so deliberately, thanks to Finch and Richardson. I had their total support all the way. I could perform, I could do all kinds of things that other departments couldn't do in this area, because the HEW secretaries themselves were so committed. Not just because it was Nixon's philosophy, but because it was their own.

I would say that within two and a half to three years, HEW's regional operation was held up as a model for the entire federal government. As a matter of fact, after about three years the Nixon administration went to the concept of having regional councils which were councils composed of all the regional directors. They met every couple of weeks.

Stein: What were those? I came across them in the clippings.

Hitt: The OMB [Office of Management and Budget] and the administration set that up. They instigated and set up the regional councils. The regional councils were a mechanism whereby all of the regional directors from the various agencies and departments were involved. When I say "agencies," in some cases it was FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] and other than just strictly departments. Those regional councils had maybe, oh, eighteen or twenty people, when there were only seven or eight actual cabinet departments represented, because the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] and the major agencies had their representatives.

Anyway, they met at least once a month, sometimes twice a month, in an attempt--and very often a successful attempt--to coordinate what they were doing, instead of HUD overlapping HEW, or labor or somebody else, in a given funding area. They were trying to work out the local problems and the local needs in a coordinated effort between the different departments. It was a great idea. It really worked very successfully.

At the time, then, when those were being put into being--and this is only by way of illustration of the stature of the HEW regional directors--each regional council was to elect its own chairman, and in subsequent years the chairmanship would rotate. Well, finally OMB had to step in, because eight out of the ten regional councils were electing HEW regional directors as chairman. OMB felt that was an imbalance that they couldn't have, so they had to step in and say, "There's no way we can have more than half of the chairmen from the same department.

But anyway, now it's interesting to see what's happened. The Carter administration has gone back exactly the opposite way. I was reading some clips the other day, that [Joseph] Califano [secretary

Hitt: of HEW] has said no more decisions in the field, we're bringing it all back to Washington. The only way you can manage this department is from the central headquarters. The field operation has been virtually castrated.

Anyway, that was my principle job. I had two of my five deputies working with the field part of the operation, because that was seventy-five percent of the job. That's where so much of my traveling came in, because I tried to do a two-day visit in every regional field office, the ten of them, at least twice a year. Some of them, it would be often. If there was a problem or they had conferences or they needed help or we had a weak spot or something, I'd be in there oftener than that.

I'd go out for two days, and when I did, I met with everybody, not just the regional director. We pulled in everybody, and almost always they would set up one meeting with the women employees, the staff, the secretaries, the stenographers.

Besides that, then I also had three other offices that came under me, and what they really were, were coordinating and advocacy roles. I had the Office of Youth and Student Affairs headed up by one of my deputies. That office, the responsibility for that operation, was to know what was going on in the department at all times by way of funding or programs that involved or impacted on youth and students, and to act as a strong advocate for them.

In other words, when anything was under discussion in funding or programatic policy, it was up to that office to point out to those in charge, "All right, what's the impact on youth and students?"

Stein: Like the environmental impact reports?

Hitt: Sort of, yes.

Stein: A student impact report.

Hitt: Right. We were supposed to be gadflies, and we were. I'm sure that there were times that some of the top brass and the agency heads were sick and tired of me or my deputy, Stan Thomas [Stanley B. Thomas], constantly in staff meetings saying, "Okay, what's the impact?" Or bringing students, youth leaders into the department to talk to these people.

I had the same thing for consumers. The Office of Consumer Services was also under me, under another deputy. It had the same function. It was not as big. The youth and student affairs was the biggest operation, next to the field, in size and personnel and time spent. Then there was the Office of Consumer Services. I also had the Office of Mental Retardation.

Hitt: It was a strange thing. I fell heir to this office, and how it ever got all of this conglomeration into it in the very beginning, I don't know, unless maybe it's because the field was there, and the field was involved in most of these things. The President's Committee on Mental Retardation was staffed by my Office of Mental Retardation. It was again the advocacy, the coordinating mechanism, the watchdog for mental retardation.

Those were the things that were put down on paper, but there were many other things, of course, that came in, many because I was a woman. I was active in the women's advocacy role within the department. The White House used me extensively for recommendations for women for commissions, committees, and high-level appointments, to do the run-down and do interviews.

For example, when they got ready to appoint a new consumer advocate at the White House to replace Betty Furness, they asked me to do the primary interviews and come up with the two or three best for them to interview, so I fell heir to that.

Stein: I was going to ask you about that. Is that when you chose Virginia Knauer?

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: Had you known her before?

Hitt: No, I had not known either one of the women. I didn't choose her. I narrowed the six candidates down to her and another woman, Virginia Trotter, who later became assistant secretary for education after I left Washington. I was very much impressed with both. It was not an easy decision to make as to which one I would rate one or two. I came up with both of them and went with them to the White House for interviews.

I settled on--and I don't know if this is an interesting sidelight or not--Virginia Knauer as my preference, because it was my feeling that in that office you need a great deal of political sensitivity. You need to know how to act, when to react. You need to know how to handle press. It was a sensitive political role, in all candor, in a Nixon administration which was not as consumer-oriented as a Johnson or a Kennedy [administration]. Almost any Republican administration is not as strong a consumer-advocate as the Democrats.

I felt Virginia Trotter had every bit as good qualifications, in a different way. But she came out of the academic world. She had been the dean of women at Nebraska University and headed up the home economics department. I didn't think that she would have the

Hitt: political experience or sensitivity from that background as did Virginia Knauer, who had been the consumer advocate for the state of Pennsylvania and had been very active in Pennsylvania politics. That's really what it came down to, not their brightness or ability.

There was another area that I got deeply involved in, and I was able to have enormous impact, both in the constituency and in the department, because of my having the field, because of my personal feeling and because both Richardson and Finch trusted me and would support me.

I became deeply involved with the Mexican-Americans as a minority group. Because I was raised here in California, I had a great sensitivity and considerable respect and affection for the Mexican-American. I had long felt--and within the year after I was at the department, I was doggone sure--that in our government minority programs, the Spanish-speaking had gotten the short end of the stick. The blacks had dominated it.

Because of the regional operations I was involved with Model Cities--to go back to that for a second, I had more contact with other departments than any other assistant secretary or agency head in HEW, because of the nature of what I was doing. I had a close liaison with the Secretary of HUD and Labor. I worked closely with the staffs both at HUD and Labor, particularly, because we were doing the same sorts of things. So I was involved with the Model Cities program.

No sooner did I get into it than I realized that the boundary lines in those major cities that were the recipients of enormous Model Cities funds for urban renewal had deliberately been drawn and gerrymandered to cut out the Spanish-speaking communities, and to hold it ninety-nine percent to the blacks.

I had no prejudice against blacks. It did not come as a result of that. I worked with them, and I think they got a fair shake too. But my feeling was that they shouldn't have ninety percent of the pie, so to speak. As a result, I recruited and hired out of California a Mexican-American who was a special assistant to me and is now at the regional field office. He's still with HEW, in the regional field office in San Francisco.

Stein: What's his name?

Hitt: Al Solano. If you're ever interested in really getting into this, Al can tell you more. I'll have to warn you: Al is enormously prejudiced in my favor, so if you ever go into it, you're into an awful session of listening-- You're going to come out of there thinking I'm practically the Virgin of Guadalupe. [Laughs] But he

Hitt: could tell more about what was done by HEW, and the whole federal government, as a matter of fact, for the Mexican-American, the Spanish-surnamed in that administration, than has ever been done before or probably ever will be since.

I spearheaded a major thrust within HEW whereby the secretary actually earmarked funds in various programs that had to be spent on the Spanish-speaking and their projects. Then we toured the country, we searched, we visited potential recipients. It was the kind of special funding where small projects, that never in the world could have competed with the big things in the general funding through the programs, had a chance to prove whether they could achieve and sustain success. It was terribly exciting. There are an awful lot of them going today that would never have existed otherwise.

Anyway, that was another [responsibility]. The last two years I was there, I spent a great deal of my time in that program, which really was not part of my formal job description.

Stein: That was primarily under Richardson?

Hitt: It started under Finch and then got added impetus when Finch went to the White House. Then Richardson carried on what Finch had started.

Stein: I see. Is that also why you served on the Mexican-American Border Commission?

Hitt: No, that was a California appointment. That was before I went back [to Washington, D.C.], but that would have been part of my prior interest in Mexico. With the HEW funding, it was not just Mexicans, it was Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and all Spanish-speaking. It was something that never got a great deal of publicity. In the first place, we didn't want it. I didn't want it to have very much publicity, because if we'd have allowed it to have that, then somebody would have come back and said, "Oh, yes, they're looking for votes." That was not the point. It was a chance to give them a fair share, an opportunity.

It never had high visibility because we wanted no misunderstandings of our intent for the program.

Being A Woman in Public Office ##

Hitt: It was not politically motivated.

Stein: Now in this policy of decentralizing operations, how much of that were you yourself able to set?

Hitt: On the decentralization--let's face it, the secretary is the one that's finally got to say "We're going to do this," if it's going to happen. But I would say that next to the secretary, I had as much to do with setting that policy as anybody else in the department. Probably the secretary, the undersecretary, and I were the three major policy setters. The input came from lots of others, in a strong advocacy role.

Insofar as the Mexican-American projects are concerned, that was a matter of selling the secretary on the idea to begin with, to the extent that the secretary would say, "This is what we're going to do." Then when it came to saying, "Well, how are we going to do it," I probably had the strongest voice in establishing that policy.

Indirectly, the same was true in the very beginning, because I was the person that had to sell him. I had to play that advocacy role and sell him on the fact that this is what we should do, to begin with.

Stein: Did it seem to make any difference in any of those negotiations or policy settings that you were a woman and they were men?

Hitt: No. As a matter of fact, never in my life have I been aware of or felt there was any difference. I don't know whether they consider me one of the boys or what, but I really never did feel any difference. No, in those areas, and in those areas where I had a major impact on policy and on policy decisions at HEW, it was not because I was a woman at all. It was because I had the respect of the two secretaries.

We'll get a little later to the Weinberger action, which was a major part and parcel of my leaving.

Stein: Yes, you talked about that last time.

Hitt: We did. That's right, I'd forgotten we had. So that no, it was neither because I was a woman that it worked, or because I was a woman that it wouldn't work. Being a woman had nothing whatever to do with it. It was strictly as an individual, a person.

Hitt: There I would have to say that I don't think there's any doubt but what my years of political experience and campaigns had a lot to do with it. It [the job] was not a reward for having worked for the party. But the very fact that I'd done all that gave me a great sensitivity to people. It kept me closer to them. I'm sure that had some effect.

Stein: Did any of the men who served under you have any difficulty working under a woman?

Hitt: Not so far as I know, but we have to predicate it on the fact that one of the major points I made, and the major discussions that I had with anybody I ever interviewed for a job who was going to be working under me or close to me, was how do you feel about working for a woman? Can you? I probed, and I also looked quietly into their backgrounds to see if they ever had before. Personality had something to do with it.

Two or three very bright young men ended up in other positions in the department whom I interviewed when I was trying to fill positions. I'd say to the secretary, "That won't work," because I knew that they not only would have extreme difficulty working for a woman, but it would be almost impossible for them to work for a middle-aged woman.

I was conscious that that could be a problem. You can sense those things. If I sensed it in an interview, that was the end of it. Let's face it, I was the boss. We did have to work together. I couldn't be productive, the department wasn't going to be well off, nobody was going to be well served, if there wasn't a very close rapport.

My relationship with my deputies was very close, and had to be. We were a very close office, that office of mine; everybody always said that. "You're the closest bunch we've ever seen. You work together. This is unusual in the bureaucracy, because it was not just the Schedule Cs* or the people that came into the administration, but it was the career people as well. Most of the people that worked for me were career people.

*Schedule C positions are appointive, exempted from Civil Service requirements and benefits. Generally, Schedule C appointees are of the same political party as the administration by which they are appointed.

Hitt: We had a great thing going, we were very close and we did work very well together. They did have a voice and I did listen to them. I didn't always do what they wanted and they knew that they weren't always going to prevail, but they knew that they were going to have an ear, and that they'd have a chance to present their side and argue it as hard as they could.

I think that's why I didn't have any problem. You see, I hired all of the top people in my operation, including the regional directors as I replaced them. The other ones that were there wouldn't have been any trouble, because they were either so old or so tired or worn-out that they wouldn't have argued with anybody.

Generally speaking, it's been my experience that the greatest difficulty of working for a woman--and particularly, as I said, a middle-aged woman--comes with the younger men, not the older ones. The middle-aged and the older men, they can take it. It's the ambitious, driving, oftentimes slightly abrasive younger men. For all of their talk about women being equal and they want their wives to work in careers, they don't want to work for a woman, many of them.

Stein: That's interesting. I wonder if it's because they feel threatened, because they haven't gotten on their own feet yet.

Hitt: I don't know whether they think that a woman might be more apt to stop their headlong drive--I don't know what it is. I have a feeling that they're more chauvinistic than the older men. They talk up a good game, [laughter] and it's all right for their wives to work, and it might be all right for their wives to have an equal salary, but rarely could they work in the same company, and almost always would the young man have to feel (I think) that his job was a little bit more important or prestigious. That's just my own observations.

I did have a lot of young staff. My deputies were all lots younger than I. I was by far the oldest person in my office, in the operation.

Stein: Was that at all a problem?

Hitt: No, because there again, I looked for young people. My deputies were all under thirty-five. One of them, Stan Thomas, was a young black from New York, who later became an assistant secretary when I left HEW, the youngest in department history. I hired him at twenty-six years old out of Time-Life as a deputy assistant. That's an incredible high ranking for the age.

Hitt: The other male deputy, Ray Chambers, was about thirty-five. He'd had legislative experience on the Hill; that's what I wanted him for. But I really looked for younger people. I wanted the youth and the energy. I had the older people in the career, the service level. I didn't want any tired older people running it. No, I purposefully looked for and hired younger people, men and women.

Stein: One of the things that you mentioned before was that you also acted as sort of an advocate for women within the department.

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: I wondered if you could give a couple of specifics.

Hitt: Not in an official role ever, because we had women's advocate offices and staff. That wouldn't have been the place for me, anyway, because I'm just not that militant. I would help them out, I was supportive, but I couldn't have done that job, because that's just not my thing.

What I could do was quietly and smilingly and indirectly say, "Well, okay now. What about women?" I could constantly needle the secretary, or anybody else about, "Well, I don't see very many women sitting in this staff meeting. Where are they?" But I did it in a different sort of way.

I did a lot of speaking in advocacy for women, but not the same kind as the Gloria Steinems and Wilma Scott-Heidis. As a matter of fact, my approach was really that equality for women starts way back in their high school counseling, and that's when it's got to begin. They cannot just expect to fall into something unearned because they wear a skirt, because they're female. What we have to do--and that was one of the things that I stressed in many speeches I gave. I feel very strongly that we do a terrible job of counseling for boys and girls in most high schools, but particularly for girls.

The route for equal opportunity for girls is for the opportunities to be opened up to their consciousness on the high school level, so that they go to school and study and come out qualified.

The last ten years, oh boy, has an MBA [Masters of Business Administration] been big in government. We were hiring MBAs; if you had an MBA, you could walk into almost any government job on a high level. It goes by spurts and spells. But the eventual route is for more women to be coming out of colleges with MBAs, for example, or whatever it takes.

Stein: The clippings in your scrapbooks covered very well the speeches that you gave to women's groups and other groups all around the country, stressing that point.

Hitt: That's the slow way, but that's the solid way.

Stein: On that whole question of getting more women in government, there was quite a to-do in the press over a statement you made fairly early in the game, in '69.

Hitt: About "qualified"--?

Stein: Yes, about women in cabinet positions.

Hitt: That was an interview, I believe in January or February of '69, soon after I went to HEW. The press women had asked for an interview with me at my office. That was an unfortunate thing. There was only one person, one presswoman, Isabel Shelton, who picked it up as I said it. And I didn't tape it. God knows, many times afterward I wished I had. She was the only person that either heard or cared to report the last half of my sentence.

They were asking me, "Well, how come--" and they were critical, rightly so, with chips on their shoulder. "How come there aren't more women in the cabinet?" Well, at that point, I'd been involved for about three or four months with recruiting and recommending women, trying to help them get more women in the sub-cabinet level, particularly. So I knew what the problem was. The statement I came back with was that the problem was not a lack of willingness, but the problem was that we could not find women who were qualified for these positions, and the crux of the whole damn thing was--and who were available.

As I said, I think the only article I ever saw that had the rest of that sentence was Isabel Shelton's. Really, that was the only time I ever had a beef with the presswomen, because I liked them. We became personal friends. They were great gals, and they've got a hard job to do.

I really did have a beef. I said it to several of them afterwards. I said, "I don't think you were really fair. You weren't on the level," for the simple reason that I made that statement and I'd gone on to discuss it saying, "You know, there are special problems with women. There are plenty of them out there, but they either have families or they have husbands. They cannot pick up and move to Washington, or they're not willing to. They don't want to."

The gist of the statement had been really not just "qualified." I said we had not been able to find women who were qualified and available and willing. I went on to point out "willing," because we had contact with many, many women that had said, "No way."

Stein: I think that the important point also is that you had already been recruiting for several months.

Hitt: As a matter of fact, almost without exception, every woman that was serving on the sub-cabinet level was one that I had recommended, or came off a list that I had turned in. I had turned in a master list in December or early January 1968-69--I think it was referred to two or three times--of about two hundred and fifty women from all over the United States whom I felt were eminently qualified for some position. They should be named to commissions, or they should be named to committees or they should be sub-cabinet level, whatever they were interested in and wanted to take, from many, many fields.

Stein: Were these women that you had come across in campaigns through that volunteer--

Hitt: A lot of them were women off that advisory committee. An awful lot of them. We loosely referred to it as the list of two hundred and fifty women, give or take ten or fifteen. I would say out of that probably a hundred or a hundred and fifty of the women were women that I had run across, became involved with. The others were just women that I knew of, or had heard of. I had other women helping me on the list. I was asking constantly, men and women, for recommendations.

Because of that, a lot of men throughout the country would get in touch with me and say, "Pat, here's a woman that I think has got it. Will you do something about it?" I was constantly fielding those names.

But the unfortunate part of it was: in all honesty, neither Bob Haldeman nor John Ehrlichman were very sympathetic toward women. What they did they did because of my needling or something like that. But they really weren't gung ho. I think Nixon was more than they, but was too busy to do much, and not really all out. Pat [Nixon] had been a housewife. His whole experience had been mostly with housewives. That's what he really thought of women, mostly, as.

I'd have to say I really didn't have the greatest cooperation in the world, though Nixon and Finch were both strong for women. They both helped.

Stein: You mean Richardson?

Hitt: Richardson. I said Nixon and I meant Richardson and Finch. That department was a pretty good example. There were quite a few women on a high level there.

But at that time I knew what the problem was. I was trying to articulate it, but unfortunately I was new. I didn't realize how careful I had to be. I was probably too candid. Not too candid, but I didn't put enough emphasis where I should have put it. I could have said that in such a way that there was no way that anybody could have, in all good honest conscience, walked out of that room and printed what they did.

Hitt: Once it was said, then I lived with that for all four years. Once it was said widely, some of the men--Bryce Harlow, for example, took me on on that. All they knew was what they read in the paper. Of course, politically it was well for them to take issue with me. But as I said, once it gets that kind of coverage, and the one gal from the Washington Star is the only one that does it right, and it hits the wires, you're sunk. Whether you said it or not, there's no way of correcting it. I got it thrown at me from then on. I always tried to explain it as much as I could, but you can't. You explain too much, and that looks like you're dissembling too.

Stein: Yes. I remember seeing in a clipping that was at least two years later, from the later files--

Hitt: It might still come up some day.

Stein: They use it as a little phrase: "the assistant secretary, who has said that there were no women qualified for cabinet positions."

Hitt: Had I been on the job a little bit longer, had I been a little bit more familiar with the workings of the press, I would have said the same thing, but I would have said it in a very different sort of a way.

Stein: I guess that's the whole secret.

Hitt: It is, it's how you say it and what you say. If for example, I had said, "Now, this is what I mean," if I'd made a big point of that, and cited some examples-- But at that point, I wasn't going to mention any names. I could have given specific names, and they could have gone and talked to them and found out and made that point. But there was no way that I was going to name any specific names because I didn't want to embarrass the people involved, and I didn't want anybody else to know. I wasn't going to say, "She is and she isn't."

[Interview break]

Hitt: When I saw those newspaper reports, I was just stunned. I was in a state of shock for days, and so was my staff and everyone else who knew me. I can remember Finch called me on the phone after the next morning's paper and said, "My God, Pat, what did you really say?" or something like that. [Laughter]

Stein: At least he knew what happens in press conferences.

Hitt: Oh, yes. But anyway, I learned a very valuable lesson very early on. Unfortunately, it stayed with me forever.

- Stein: Here is the San Francisco Examiner clipping from February 27, 1969.*
[Hands Mrs. Hitt the clipping] I pulled it out of the files because it was fairly typical of all of them. Of course, then the reporters ran to other high-ranking women to get their reactions.
- Hitt: Oh yes, then they ask everybody. Of course, Perle Mesta, God love her--she's a darling person, but let's face it, she's on the other side of the aisle. She'd love to be able to say something.
- Stein: They even got Gladys O'Donnell into the act.
- Hitt: Everybody. Well, I doubt that Gladys--Gladys might have said something like that. I don't know.
- Stein: Of course, heaven knows what Gladys really said.
- Hitt: [Reads clipping] But she's [the reporter] got it right. As far as my statement was concerned, Malvina [Stephenson] here--she was there that day, she and Vera Glaser both. They worked together. She's got everything exactly right, right up to the point where they left out the "and available."

School Integration

- Stein: You mentioned last time that there were a number of specific subjects that we should be sure to get on tape, about what you did in the department. You mentioned the school integration problems that you and Finch walked into.
- Hitt: Oh, yes. I'll give you one thing here, which is a small example of policy-setting, how it really works. It wasn't policy. This wasn't literally policy, but anyway, Finch walked into an absolutely unbelievable mess in that department, as a residue of a presidential campaign going on. Johnson was not going to run again. He had declared in the middle of February 1968 that he wasn't going to run, and if he had, as the incumbent, things would have been very different.

At that point, the Democrats really began leaving Washington in droves, like has happened with Republican administrations prior to that, too. Rats leaving a sinking ship, it's called. I was living there, so I know a little bit of the background.

*See next page.

Pat Hitt: No Woman Fit for Cabinet



MRS. Pat Hitt sets off a political storm.

*'Not a single one
has the training
and ability'*

By Malvina Stephenson

WASHINGTON — (WNS) — Isn't there a single woman in the entire United States who is qualified to be a member of President Nixon's cabinet?

At a recent briefing, Mrs. Pat Hitt, who as a new Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare is Nixon's top woman official, said she couldn't think of any and thereby stirred up a tempest. Her surprising remark, offered voluntarily, has angered prominent Republican and Democratic ladies alike.

"These cabinet departments are so big and all-encompassing, very few men are capable of administering them, and frankly, I couldn't give you a single, solitary woman who has the training, background and ability to fill one of these Cabinet posts," she said.

Mrs. Hitt was co-chairman of the Nixon-Agnew campaign, and had a long association with the Richard Nixons in California. It was she who drew up the list of suitable women for appointments in the Nixon Administration, and certainly she was considered to have the priority for whatever she might want personally.

Thurs., Feb. 27, 1969 ✻✻✻ **B.H. Examiner—Page 23**

"I am surprised at her attitude," declared fellow Californian, Mrs. Gladys O'Donnell, president of the National Federation of Republican Women. "Everybody sort of had a feeling she (Mrs. Hitt) might be the Cabinet member. I supported her, but if she doesn't feel women are qualified, that puts a different face on it."

Mrs. Hitt's downgrading of women had immediate repercussions at the Democratic National Committee. Mrs. Geri Joseph, vice chairman and director of women's activities, brought her critical reaction to National Chairman Fred Harris, who agreed with her. They are ready to take advantage of what they consider a real boner.

"That was a surprising thing," Mrs. Joseph said. "I agree with her that it's hard to get women to leave their homes and communities, but it can be done. I don't agree with her that women aren't qualified."

And with a jab of her needle, Mrs. Joseph said, "Maybe, Republican women aren't qualified. Those are the women she is speaking for. But speaking for Democratic women, it is not true at all."



**PERLE
MESTA**
disagrees
with Pat
Hitt on
women in
Cabinet
posts.

Mrs. Joseph said she is troubled by the double standard apparently being applied to men and women in the Republican Administration.

"Any number of men have been named to top positions who are no more qualified than any number of women," she continued. "Take the Attorney General (John Mitchell). What special qualifications does he have? He is a friend of Mr. Nixon and he is a lawyer."

This set-to actually began in a recent news conference at the White House. Vera Glaser, Washington bureau chief for the North American Newspaper Alliance, reminded President Nixon that he had named only three women out of some 200 high-level Administration appointments.

"Can we expect a more equitable recognition of women's ability, or are we going to remain a lost sex?" she queried.

After a laughing rejoinder, the President said he hadn't been aware of the imbalance and promised to correct it "very promptly."

As of a week later, however, his personal assistant, Harry Flemming, said he had received no such instructions.

The political sensitivity of the issue was stressed by Mrs. Perle Mesta, famous hostess and long-time Democrat, who stumped for Nixon in 1960.

"I like Pat Hitt," declared Mrs. Mesta, "but she is going to lose a lot of women's votes with that statement. It is unfortunate. It is going to hurt Nixon."

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A pioneer leader in the National Woman's Party, Mrs. Mesta proudly describes herself as a "feminist." A former U.S. minister to Luxembourg, she wants Nixon to place some women in top diplomatic posts.

"The best way for Nixon to offset Mrs. Hitt's statement is to appoint women in some top jobs," she continued. "I think he should have named one woman in the Cabinet but it is not too late to put some women in as Ambassadors and other top spots."

Miss Alice Paul, of Washington, D.C., veteran president of the National Woman's Party, wants to see their theory of "equal rights" extended so that women can achieve a 50-50 position in government. "Brains don't have sex," she reminded. "Besides, women have a point of view that is essential everywhere."

Hitt: It was perfectly obvious that the chances were at least even (if not better) that there was going to be a Republican president rather than a Democrat president. That showed up all the way through in all the departments, I'm sure, but the most dramatic example of that attitude and what happens when that occurs was in HEW on the integration issue.

Secretary [W.J.] Cohen literally put off or postponed every major HEW school integration deadline to come due between February and June of 1969. I'm sure this has happened in other administrations. The Republicans might do the same thing. I don't know. But that department and that administration never really made a major school integration decision and stuck to it or enforced it, in almost the entire year of 1968. They would simply grant extensions, extensions, extensions rather than have to take the action that was going to be very unpopular and cause a lot of problems.

The first one in the new administration was as early as February. By that time, the extensions were all used up. There was nothing you could do about it. Also, a new administration coming up would be hesitant [to grant further extensions]. You know, the previous administration could extend and extend and the newspapers didn't pay much attention.

Almost without exception, the major problems that Finch as HEW secretary had, and the major decisions that he had to make in 1969, were regarding school desegregation and civil rights problems. Every one of them had been left over for him. They were all a bag of worms, and starting right off the bat, he had to do it. That's one of the major reasons, I think, why Finch got a reputation for vacillating, for being indecisive. It wasn't really so much indecisiveness as here, he was faced with this crisis. All of a sudden, the deadline had come up on it, and he didn't know that much about it and the background. But most of it, he had to act on.

That's what caused a great deal of turmoil. For some reason or other, within HEW, within the department itself, the concept had gotten around that Finch was going to be the administration liberal. Well, he really isn't. He's not a conservative. He's very much a moderate. But the department, the press, thought that Bob Finch was going to be a Nelson Rockefeller, philosophically. So they expected a vastly different kind of decision, in many cases. Then when it didn't come out the way they wanted, then they lambasted him. He'd let them down, he was all wrong. They labeled him something to begin with that he really wasn't.

To get back to policy decisions--this isn't really policy, either, but the inner workings of things. I remember sitting in Bob's office that spring. It might have been early fall, but it

Hitt: doesn't matter, anyway. There was a major crunch and a deadline on some integration and civil rights legislation enactment in Tennessee that had just simply run out of extensions and had been held over. There was also a special election coming up in Tennessee. I don't know whether it was the U.S. Senate seat--no, it couldn't have been. It had to be either the governorship or a congressional seat, anyway, that had been held by a Democrat. It looked like a Republican had a very good chance of taking that seat.

Of course, the two U.S. Senators from Tennessee, both Republicans, were putting an enormous amount of pressure on Finch not to hand down this decision, not to instigate this action, until after the election, to postpone it for thirty days, until after the election, which is not an unusual thing. It happens all the time in government. It's part of government.

The department and his own civil rights director, Leon Panetta, was putting an equal amount of pressure on him the other way. Coupled with the pressure from the United States Senators, he was getting pressure from the White House, from Haldeman and Ehrlichman: "Don't do it; put this thing off." And his own department, his own appointees, the civil rights director, and the whole department was at him tooth and nail, calling him all kinds of things, "if you don't do it, if you go through with it."

So he called one day and said, "Come on up, I want to talk to you." I went up, and there were two or three of us there. He said, "What the hell am I going to do? The White House says they want this postponed for thirty days. Two United States Senators--both of them are friends of mine--want it postponed. My own department is going to be in a turmoil over it. What do I do?"

I remember saying, "Well, Bob, I think you've got to look at it this way. The Republicans think they are going to win this seat. If you make this decision, precipitate it, and if the guy loses, you're going to be blamed forever for it. Maybe he's going to lose anyway. Maybe they're over optimistic and they're not going to win this anyhow. But if you make this decision, they'll always blame the loss on your decision, and not on the true situation as it was."

I said, "You've got your department. After all, you're the boss here. It's going to be tough, but you ought to be able to handle it. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't, but it is perfectly legal to wait thirty days. There's nothing wrong with it. You're well within your perogatives to wait thirty days."

I said, "Ordinarily, you would wait. If there was no election, nothing, you would wait, if it weren't that the department is putting pressure on you to make this decision. If you're not ready

Hitt: to make it, don't make it. But you cannot let this department run you. The other side of the coin is: do you really want to take a chance on that seat being lost, a critical seat, and you being blamed forever for it when maybe it wasn't your fault at all?"

The end result was that he postponed the decision, and the election was lost. He didn't win it anyway. You see what would have happened. If he had made the decision--the election was lost anyway, and it was going to be, no matter what he did, but if he had made--

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Hitt: It sounds piddling out here at home, but back there in that climate and that element, it's a big thing.

Stein: If there isn't anything more that needs to be said about that, you also mentioned---

Hitt: No. I think you have to understand, in all fairness to Finch, but in all fairness to the department and everything else, I think it needs to be understood: Anybody studying those HEW days needs to understand that there were factors there that made it an almost impossible situation for anybody.

On Delegations Abroad

The Tubman Funeral

Stein: You also mentioned last time the [William] Tubman [president of Liberia] funeral. I think that you told me a little bit about it, but it was off tape. We ought to get that story briefly.

Hitt: That was an experience. I had many really incredible experiences. Because there really weren't all that many women in high-level positions. I was often called on to do things for the president or the administration, to be an official representative of the United States. That was one of them, the Tubman funeral. The president, of course, didn't go. Vice-President Agnew couldn't, for some reason or other, so the president put together a delegation for that funeral, and I was one of them.

We flew over in Air Force Two. There were about thirteen or fourteen of us. I was the only woman. It was unbelievable, the experience. It was in Monrovia, Liberia. A thing like that goes on for three or four days. It's very, very formal. We were all billeted at the U.S. Embassy.

Hitt: Finch headed the delegation, so he was billeted in the ambassador's house. The rest of us were billeted in the first officers' homes. They moved out in order to give us their homes, because we were within the compound, though it was not an unfriendly country. They wanted us where the guides and everybody else could take care of us.

It was blisteringly hot. It was in July, I think, June or July. I believe it was July. The temperature was well over a hundred, and everything we did or went to, we had to be in formal attire. The men had to wear morning coats to some of the ceremonies and black tie to others. I had to wear a long black dress, long sleeves, long dress with a high neck, for everything the whole time, and dress very formally.

Stein: Where in the world would you even come up with a dress like that in the summer?

Hitt: Well, I had to go buy one. I had to go rush out. I had twenty-four hours notice that I was going, and I had to rush out and shop. They gave us our shots at Andrews Air Force Base. Of course, we had diplomatic passports, but the doctors were there at Andrews Air Force Base before we got on the plane. We just all lined up and they shot us full of stuff, the different things that we needed.

I sent out a couple of friends of mine--I said, "You go look here and here. If you can find anything in my size in black, you let me know." I went to a couple of places, and we were leaving on a Monday so I had a Saturday to do it. (It wasn't twenty-four hours, it was forty-eight hours notice.) And I don't wear black, ever, so I said, "Look, it can't be terribly expensive, because I'll never have it on again. Whatever I buy, I'll never wear again, because black is not for me." Of course, you can't very well put on tennis shoes or walking shoes or low-heeled sandals with a long black dress, so that meant high heels, the works.

It was three solid days of services. The first one was in the church. It was not the funeral service. What did they call it? A panegyric. Anyway, we were four hours in this hot, hot church, an old church. No air conditioning. It did have windows open, but there were flies all over the place. We were sitting all crowded in.

That's when I saw Haile Selassie for the first time. As I said, when he walked in, his presence filled that place. This little tiny guy, with such majesty and dignity. It was a presence.

Anyway, nothing in English. We sat there for four hours on hard benches, [lowers voice] and I kept falling asleep! It was hot, it was in the afternoon. I was sitting between Bob Finch and Jack Veneman, and the two of them would just poke me like this, because

Hitt: my head would nod and go down. I was just fighting it, exhausted from having flown all night. I didn't sleep very well on the plane anyway.

Then we had to make the formal call on the widow. We did that in the afternoon, and then there was a big reception that night. We tried to get a little sightseeing in-between. But the most difficult part of all of it was that the funeral service was held in the same church. Mobbed, just mobbed. And the people were wailing and screaming and keening and moaning all day long and all night long all over that city and every place you went. I got to the point where I thought that really, truly, my head was going to burst. And I'm not that kind of person. Just this constant wailing and keening all day long, all night long, all the time. Even in the compound we could hear it. Of course, he was very beloved, and that's their way of showing it. This went on for days. These incredible people came in from the back country in incredible costumes and body paint and ceremonial garb.

The toughest thing of all was the actual funeral. Now, the cemetery is about four miles from town. Normally, everybody in the church would march the four miles behind the casket in procession to the cemetery. This is required; this is part of the state protocol. Because the roads were all torn up--and that wouldn't really have been all that bad, because it was mostly downhill--because the roads were all torn up for construction, we could not walk to the cemetery. So we walked five blocks from the church, down two and up three, turned around and walked back. We walked the whole long procession with the total Liberian air force, three DC-3s, flying in formation over the whole thing, in the boiling hot sun. The blacktop was so soft that I had to walk the whole time on my toes. If I put my heels down, they sank into the blacktop to such an extent that it threw me off balance. Here we were, just miles of people, and here I was in this long high-necked long-sleeved dress, and the temperature was well over a hundred.

We walked the equivalent of four miles in five blocks, up and down and up and down, up and down, people screaming and yelling. The heat--I was almost beside myself. The one advantage I had was that the three tallest men in the delegation, walked one on each side of me and one in front of me, got me in between them, and I got a little shade from them and their top hats. That's absolutely the gospel truth. They were there to hold me up, because there were a couple of times that I almost went down, between exhaustion and stumbling and heat, I almost passed out.

By the time we got through, I was just green, obviously. But I was not about to give up! I'd gone over there to do something, and I was going to do what I was expected to do, and if the rest of them could, so could I, which is part of this woman complex. If you men are strong enough to do this, by God, I'm not the weaker sex.

Hitt: Finally, by the time we had walked the last block of that procession, some of them looked at me and said, "I think we'd better go and sit down in the church for a minute before we go find the car." We went back, and the church was a little cooler by then. We sat down and I got myself pulled together, and went back to the car and on to another reception.

As I said, it was an incredible experience, physically and emotionally. And all the time, this wailing and screaming--oh! It was beyond belief.

The Rockefeller Mission to South America

Stein: You also on the Rockefeller--?

Hitt: I also went on the Rockefeller mission to South America. There again, it was really the kind of thing that happened to me often, because I was the only woman of sufficient rank and available. The nature of my job was that I could be gone. I had good deputies, good staff. I wasn't writing legislation, doing that kind of thing. I traveled a great deal in my job, so I did have the mobility, yes, at the time that Nixon sent Rockefeller on those three missions. I wasn't able to make all of them, because in the early months of the administration, I didn't really feel I ought to be gone that much.

But I did make two of them, and I took the HEW type of assignments. That delegation was made up of economists, agriculturalists, academics, businessmen, a wide cross-section of people and professions. I took the ones that pertained to the health and education and welfare. There was a doctor along and a scientist, but more or less the HEW kind of things--the governmental rather than private--fell to me.

It was fascinating. I didn't see much of South America, from the standpoint that we were in lots of places, but no sightseeing. There were meetings all day long and most of the night. We were in meetings and conferences. But it was fascinating, and it was an eye-opener to me. When I got back, I wrote a lengthy report to the president on the trip and pointed out that Nelson Rockefeller did an incredible job for the president. His rapport with the people and officials was marvelous.

But one of the interesting things to me about the trip was that I had the same kind of, I guess, misconceptions, or at least I had the same opinion that an awful lot of Americans have, that everybody abroad has got a hand out, all they want is money, dollars, dollars, dollars.

Hitt: The misconceptions were never brought home more clearly to me than on that trip. Everybody we talked to, every place I visited, they really weren't asking for dollars. They were asking for know-how. They would say, "Can you send us artists' supplies for our art schools? We need supplies, we need good art paper, we need instructors. We'd use your dollars," but "Send us your expertise. Help us to get your expertise. Let us send some students up to study with you. Send some of your academicians down here, your businessmen," all the way through.

The other thing that I said in the report to the president, and I said to Nelson Rockefeller on the way back from the trip, the other thing that came through loud and clear was--and I don't think the South Americans are any different from people all over the world--they're proud people. They want our help, they need our help. At the same time, they're much older nations and cultures than we. They're proud people, and it hurts a little for them to have to ask the crass newcomers for something.

So whatever we do, we do in our own best interests. For God's sake, let's not expect to be thanked and kowtowed to and palavered over. I think that's the way I expressed it to Nixon when I wrote back. I said, "Let's not dye every grain of rice red, white, and blue." It was a tremendous experience.

I learned there, and I learned on other trips, that we really do have a major responsibility to other peoples and other countries of the world. It's not just out of the goodness of our hearts. Dammit, it's our survival. It's to our benefit. Let's face it, it's in our own best interest to help. But we have to remember that we're dealing with proud, independent human beings, who because of different circumstances--they either were decimated in World War I and World War II, or for circumstances different from us--are placed in a position where they're beholden to us. For God's sake, let's not rub their noses in it.

By that I don't mean that you just willy-nilly ship off hundreds of millions of dollars to some crooked politicians. But there's two ways to go. The president and I had quite a long conversation about that. Nelson Rockefeller and I talked about it on the way back quite a bit.

But these were all learning processes, growing processes for me and I was very, very fortunate to have the opportunity. I'll always be grateful. Sure it was hard work. I never worked so hard in my life. I never was so tired, so worn out. I never was so challenged. But there were so many really immeasurable learning experiences that came to me that had enormous impact on my thinking and my attitude and my philosophy.

The Soviet Union

Stein: And you also went to the Soviet Union?

Hitt: Yes. I had three weeks in Russia. That was not a government trip, however. That was a private trip. I was asked to go because I was a government official. That was again where it was an attempt--it was like the trip to China,* the same organization--an attempt to get women from all walks of life, women who had knowledge and expertise and established reputations representing the United States. But it was not an official thing. I went as a private citizen. I mean, I paid my own way. I took vacation time to go. However, I probably would not have gone or been asked to go had I not been a government official. During the whole trip, I met with my counterparts always. While the architects would meet with architects and the doctors would meet with doctors, I always met with the government people on either a national or a state level.

Stein: Was this a women's trip?

Hitt: Yes, all women.

Stein: Professional women, then.

Hitt: Thirty-two or three of us. Three weeks in Moscow, Leningrad, Tashkent, Samarkand, and Kiev.

Some HEW Programs

Volunteer Action

Stein: What I'd like to do now is review very briefly some of your programs. I'm working under a bit of a time deadline, so I hope we're not galloping through this too fast. From looking at the clippings, I gathered that there were several key issues that you were concentrating on. One was volunteer action. One was child care. One, of course, was mental retardation, that you mentioned before.

Hitt: Which was officially part of my job. The others came in because I was a woman and interested in them.

*In early 1977 Mrs. Hitt traveled to Communist China.

Stein: Then there was a field letter, or a newsletter of some sort. I didn't know if you'd started that.

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: There's something called the Volunteer Action Program that called for government, business, and individuals to cooperate in privately-funded programs to supplement the service of existing governmental and private agencies.

Hitt: That was the national voluntary action board, the national corps for voluntary action that Nixon started early on. It had a representative from each one of the cabinet departments, was headed up by George Romney, and also had representation from the private sector. We were supposed to see what could be done within government programming and how volunteers could be used to supplement and coordinate it. I was the HEW representative on that.

Stein: And I gather you spoke quite a bit about volunteerism.

Hitt: Yes, because that's what I'd been all my life. I really believe in it. I ran afoul with some of the women's libbers on that one; I'd have a little problem with the really militant. They'd say, "Oh yes, you're out talking about volunteers. You want women to do the things for nothing, to give service for nothing. Let's face it, why should they do anything for nothing, why shouldn't they be paid? This volunteer business is rot." We had some go-arounds on that.

Let's face it: there are always women, and men, who want to volunteer. I think there's a big role to be played in this country by volunteers. It's not that somebody is trying to get something for nothing.

Stein: Speaking of women's libbers, you mentioned, as I was leaving last time, there was a sit-in in Finch's office. What was that about?

Hitt: Well, that was women's righters. I don't remember what year, but I don't think it was the first year. I think it must have been about 1970. This was primarily the black mothers, but there were whites, too. It was all part of the civil rights problem and the demand for day care and the women's rights issue and everything else. They simply descended on HEW because they wanted more money and more funds. They took over Bob Finch's office and just stayed there.

We were faced with a choice. What were we going to do, get the police in there and bodily eject them and make the headlines or the news, or sweat it out and let them have it and hope that they'll go home by midnight that night?

Hitt: They did. About nine-thirty or ten at night, they got tired and went home. But we didn't know when we left at the end of the day. Bob literally had to vacate his office. He just went into somebody else's office and let them have it, and there was minor destruction. It really wasn't a very appealing kind of a thing. I suppose if they had stayed all night--they said they were going to--I suppose if they had stayed all night that night and probably all the next day, and it looked like it was going to be another night, we would have had to call the authorities. But to take a chance on it being a twenty-four episode or less than that, was better. We'd have made terrible headlines.

Stein: Did that particular sit-in affect policy at all?

Hitt: No. It had no effect whatsoever on policy. As a matter of fact, things like that work just the opposite. If there'd been an inclination to meet their demands, I think you felt like, "Well, I can't do it for at least a year," because we can't let it be determined this way. But HEW is always getting things like that. There's always somebody sitting-in some place or marching up and down the halls or taking over the auditorium or doing something. That's the nature of the department. There are a lot of dissidents, both within and without.

Stein: Yes, I would imagine it would happen.

Hitt: Our own employees--lots of dissidents among the younger ones gave us trouble. If you're going to be at HEW, that's the way it is.

Child Care

Stein: Getting back to the programs: one of the others was child care. Now what was the story there?

Hitt: Well, in my earlier years, at one point in my life, I had run a nursery school.

Stein: I remember that. You talked about that.

Hitt: So I knew a little bit about it. My background had been education, but I had never done all that much with it or even thought about it. I got back there and I really became convinced that there are an awful lot of mothers on welfare who really would rather not be. Everybody on welfare isn't a bum. There were an enormous number of women, who if there was adequate care available for the children, would work.

Hitt: Head Start was part of that. That's one of the facets of Head Start. It's not only good child care for working mothers, but it's also giving underprivileged children a leg up that a lot of other kids get. The things that they learn at home before they ever go to school, these don't have an opportunity to learn.

As a result, I was very much an advocate for government funding and not just Head Start, but government funding of all kinds of day care, but particularly with the learning. Not just custodial care, but where the children were learning too. I did an awful lot of traveling and an awful lot of visiting of day care facilities.

It serves two purposes. I went to a lot of places, low-income neighborhoods, where one mother would provide day care for four, five or six little children. The government funded her so that she could stay home with her own while she was doing something in the neighborhood. Lots of them were held in churches and in all kinds of buildings that weren't in use all the time. But I did get very deeply involved in that whole study, and in the experimental day care center that we established at HEW.

Stein: I read about that one. That was on the roof?

Hitt: Yes. Well, the playground was on the roof, but there was a part of a storey there [in the building that we also used for day care]. There were room facilities there (it was used for storage), so we just cleaned it out and then put a high fence around the roof and put up swings and play equipment, as an experiment.

I also did a lot of visiting and touring and talking with people, at the telephone company and factories, weaving factories, for example, in the South, all kinds of places where they had employed a lot of women. I was looking into and studying the day care provided by the company, if the company provided day care, and how it worked, when it was right there on the facility. I did a lot of speaking and a lot of encouraging of companies to do that. The telephone company--there are a number of them that do, that have done a really outstanding job on location.

But yes, I was very much involved in that, was a strong advocate, did a lot of studying. I had a summer intern, a college girl, one summer put strictly on that, in-plant day care. I always had college interns every summer, as many as my budget could afford, because I liked to use them, and I wanted to have them, and I thought that was a good spot for them, particularly. Sometimes they were boys and sometimes girls.

We put one of the college interns on a whole-three month session, one whole summer, doing a study and a report of factory, in-plant day care. She visited a number of them and did outstanding work on them.

Stein: That sounds like a very interesting program, because it seemed to me it was implementing the Nixon idea of involving the private sector.

Hitt: That's right. At the same time, I was screaming for government funds to do it too, where the private sector couldn't.

Consumer Education

Stein: One of the other issues seemed to be consumer education.

Hitt: Well, that came through this office. We had the Office of Consumer Affairs in HEW, so we did get into consumer education and the role of government in consumer education, the private sector in consumer education, consumer protection. While the official role at HEW was just as a watchdog, an advocacy role for the consumer in HEW programs, obviously it branches out into other things.

Stein: Was Ralph Nader around then at that time?

Hitt: Yes.

Stein: Were you having to contend with him?

Hitt: Not too much. I saw him two or three times. I didn't have to contend with him. I often took the other side of the argument and said that there is a responsibility on both sides. I never had to debate him, fortunately.

Stein: Was he very much a thorn in your side at that point?

Hitt: No, not really. I wasn't fighting Ralph Nader. I thought he would go overboard sometimes, and I thought he was off on a tangent, and when I thought so, I would say so. But we were not necessarily in adversary roles.

Stein: I also wondered about that newsletter.

Hitt: The HEW newsletter?

Stein: Was that something that you started?

Hitt: Yes. The Field Letter, yes I did. HEW had a newsletter, an inter-departmental vehicle. Then we started one, the HEW Field Letter. I started that, because everything that was in the HEW newsletter did not pertain or was not of interest--it was an internal organ--to

Hitt: the field, to the regions. But there was much that was going on in the regions that one needed to know about. So we started the one that was strictly--yes, my office started it and paid for and published it--for the field. It was the organ for the regional offices, really.

Stein: The editor, I gather, was Edward Stevens. Is there anything that we need to say about him?

Hitt: No, except that he was in the public relations-public affairs office. I used part of his time; he was detailed to me. He had a terminal illness and he was perfectly able to do work on a part-time basis, very talented, a great guy. But he couldn't keep up the whole pace in the public affairs, so I said, "Okay, let me have him. Let's put him on the newsletter, because he can do a great job. It gives him something to do and it gets him out of the pressure."

Staff Members

Deputies

Stein: There were several other names I came across of people who worked under you. I thought you could maybe just tell me a little bit about them. Dr. Inabel B. Lindsay was social services advisor.

Hitt: Yes. I had a great way of collecting people. Well, for one thing, my office was fun, it was a going thing. There was this great esprit de corps. There were always people over at HEW that wanted to work there. But also because they knew that I really believed in the things that I was doing, they would more or less gravitate to me.

Now Dr. Lindsay was a black woman, much older woman. She had been with HEW for many, many years, in day care and education. She came to the point where she couldn't work full-time, but she was on a part retirement. She was interested in day care. They'd just given her some piddly little thing to do, but she was a bright woman, bright as the devil, and she'd just been really pastured out. So she came to me one day, and she said, "Pat, I've got the time. I really would like to get in to work with you on the things that you're doing. Why don't you see if you can't get me detailed to you for that time. You'll make use of me."

Hitt: Well, I did, and it just worked out great. We became very, very close friends. She was a wonderful person, and it gave her a whole new lease on life to have something that was productive to do, and something worthy of her talents, instead of just being shuffled off to the back of the bureaucracy.

I don't mean to give the impression that I was being benevolent. She was great for me too. She held up her end. Her contribution was significant.

Stein: What had her background been?

Hitt: She had been an educator, a college professor.

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Hitt: She had specialized in the younger children, pre-school and early school. She was in the Children's Bureau for a while. That's where she kind of got farmed out. It was just ridiculous. She had far too much to offer to be piddling around in there.

There was also a part-time women's executive group in HEW--I don't know if it came through in any of the files--that I got involved in in an advocacy role. It was a tremendous idea. It was women who were really highly skilled, highly trained, executive secretaries, researchers, this kind of thing, that for one reason or another, either due to age or small children at home, couldn't work full time. Part-time work is very difficult in government. It's awfully hard because the Congress allots you so many slots, which is so many jobs. If you use some for part-time, then you've got to take off some full-time.

Given a shortage of staff--and nobody ever has enough though it may seem like they've got an enormous staff, it's never enough--there's a great reluctance to hire anybody part-time, because it takes up the same slot as a full-time person.

This group had been in being before I got there, but I heard of it soon after, because I had somebody helping me that was part of it. So I got interested and involved in it. We were able to battle it out and get the civil service commission to set aside half-slots, without taking from anybody else's. That was just great, because the offices would use them, since they weren't losing a full-time slot. They all had the budget to pay their salaries, but they had to stay within the head count. So that's what I was interested in, and fairly active on their behalf there in the department. I don't know if any other department had such a group or not.

- Hitt: They were very sharp women, and they were great for research and special assignments.
- Stein: That's interesting, because that's certainly something that nowadays everybody is asking to have implemented.
- Hitt: Yes, so we had it right there. There was, oh, probably seventy-five to a hundred of them.
- Stein: And this was just in HEW?
- Hitt: Just in HEW. Of course, that's not very many, when you think of the total of HEW. But that was there in the Washington office. It was also possible to work it out for some of the field offices where the field regional directors wanted to use it. It was a matter of somebody with sufficient clout and articulate enough to plead the case before the civil service commission.
- Stein: You also had Barbara Burns as your deputy assistant for consumer services?
- Hitt: That's right. She headed up the consumer services, that office.
- Stein: What was her background?
- Hitt: A great variety of things. When I hired her, Barbara had no background in consumers per se. That office was there, and I wanted to make a change in the director of it and make it a deputy instead of a director, upgrade it and make a change. The woman who was there before had become so totally involved in the consumer organizations that she really was no longer an advocate of the department. She was everything but on their payroll. This was not what I was looking for.

I wanted somebody in there who had some administrative capabilities. They could learn the consumer role, but they had to be able to manage the office, and had to be divorced from any outside organizations, Ralph Nader or the Consumer Council of America or any of those, so that they weren't a lobbyist for something else.

I knew of Barbara. I'd known of her for quite some time, and she has done a number of things in an administrative capacity. She'd been the executive secretary for a while for the man that headed up the Kennedy Center. Her background had been administrative. Barbara was a gal who was a good speaker, articulate, and attractive. She knew people and could get along with them well, which was another thing I had to have, because let's face it, that office was constantly appearing at consumer conventions and meetings and had to be able to do a good job for HEW and the administration. I knew that she could, because I'd seen her do it in public affairs jobs before.

Hitt: At the time, I said, "You can learn consumerism, but you can't learn to have good public relations with people and be a good administrator and get the most out of the staff and have the plain old good sense that it takes to represent us."

She was the only person, out of all of them on my staff that I hired, that really had no background in what they were going to do, specifically, who had to learn it.

Stein: And Stanley B. Thomas, Jr. was the deputy for--

Hitt: Youth and student affairs. He's the young fellow from New York who, up until the time that President Carter was inaugurated, was the assistant secretary for human development, which grew out of parts of my office at the time that they reorganized the department and I left. Then he took over what had been part of it.

Stein: I didn't come across the names of any of the other deputy assistant secretaries.

Hitt: Well, there was Ray Chambers, who was my deputy assistant secretary for administration. He had been on the Hill, a congressional staff officer. That's why I wanted him, because he had the liaison with the Hill and he knew Washington, lived in Washington for many years. Then there was another deputy assistant secretary that was more or less the field--I brought him in out of the field. He was there about a year before I left. [Fumbles for name] Isn't that awful? William Bronson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Field Operations.

Dr. Paul Niebank was there first. He was the deputy for the field. He's now a provost at U.C. [University of California], Santa Cruz. I got a letter from him the other day saying not to be surprised if I got a letter of inquiry from a small college he'd applied to for the presidency. He was more of an academic. He was at the University of Pennsylvania in management when I hired him.

Stein: I think I came across an article about him in the newsletters.

Hitt: Yes, I'm sure you would have.

Civil Servants

Stein: You also mentioned something last time about wanting to comment on career civil servants.

Hitt: Oh, yes, because I really think that they're probably the most unjustly maligned group or class of employees in the world. And you have to live with it. You have to be there to realize it, because I was guilty of the same attitude as most. For some reason or other, the general public thinks that the career civil servant is just a sponger and a bum, because of the built-in safeguards and guarantees of the job, because it is difficult to fire them. It's almost impossible to fire one of them.

Because of those things, they've gotten a reputation for being incompetent as a group. You hear people say, "Oh God, they're career, the bureaucrats, the career civil servants," all of the time. Really, they are the mortar that holds the bricks together. Now, when you're there and you live with it, you see it. If you didn't have the career civil service, and you had a total upheaval of everybody and all the employees and policies, or a major part of them, every four years or every two years, we'd never get off dead center, because it takes the new people coming in two years to learn what it's all about, to really be effective. It's the career people that hold the whole thing together.

Most of them are not political. They're very apolitical, and they work just the same and just as hard for a Republican administration as a Democrat. My guess is that most of them are probably registered Democrats because we've had more Democrat administrations than Republican administrations in the last forty or fifty years. They got their jobs, but they were not political jobs.

They work for the secretary and the policy. Whatever is decided, that's what they implement. I just have nothing but respect for most career employees. Sure, there's about ten percent, or maybe twenty percent of them, that are somewhat incompetent, and that are very difficult. Their public relations are terrible. They also drag their heels if they don't believe in something. They can cause all kinds of problems. But you're talking about just about twenty percent of them. You'd find twenty percent of somewhat less-than-ideal employees in any company. I'm sure General Motors has twenty percent of their employees that they consider less than top notch.

But for the most part, the career people--I think--are magnificent. Most of them work hard, they work long hours, they do their job and they take pride in it, and they're very real, caring Americans.

Stein: What do you think of the current efforts to repeal the Hatch Act?*

*The Hatch Act of 1939 is an omnibus law that prohibits political activity by federal employees.

Hitt: I don't like it, and this is not a partisan attitude. I think that the Hatch Act shouldn't be repealed. I think it should maybe be adapted. I think maybe it should be clarified. I don't think that these people should be prohibited [from participating in politics]. The Hatch Act, in many cases, went too far.

For one thing, the Hatch Act applies to political appointees below sub-cabinet level. The only people who are exempt from the Hatch Act are those who are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Well, that's ridiculous. My husband, for example, who was a Schedule C and strictly a political appointment--he went to Interior and then Commerce with Rogers Morton--he was Hatched. Now this is silly! My deputies were all Hatch. That's carrying it much too far.

On the other hand, I think it was with very good reason that there has to be such a law. I do not think that career public servants should become deeply involved in partisan politics. That's the only thing it affects. They can all get into the city council, they can run for city council, they can get into anything, as long as it's not a partisan kind of thing.

I really don't think that there is any place for partisan politics in the underpinnings of government, the career people. But I think those that are non-career, I think it's perfectly asinine for them not to be political. They're political appointees, let's face it. The non-career people in a Republican administration are Republican, and in a Democrat administration they're Democrats. They're the first resignations that are asked for. So it's silly. That's what they are, and that's why they're there. It's perfectly ridiculous to say, "You can't practice political things. You can't contribute to a political party. You can't head a political dinner." They got there because of it.

I do think that the principle of the Hatch Act is good for the career [people]. It really isn't depriving them of their rights. They can vote. As a matter of fact, they could quietly contribute, I suppose. I don't know now, with disclosure laws, whether they could or not. But on their weekends or off-time or evenings, they can go down and work in any headquarters they want to as volunteers. They can do everything that anybody else can do except be actively political. And you don't wear political campaign buttons around the department. Usually some do, but it's not really the best thing in the world.

But for them to take a very active part in politics: let's face it, they can't do it in just their off-hours and the other taxpayers are paying them. They're not paying them to be working in a campaign. So I really think that they should not play leading, publically identified roles in politics. But for the rest of it, they're free to do what they want.

Stein: What did your husband do in the administration?

Hitt: He was the executive assistant to Rogers Morton at Interior, and then when Rog Morton went to Commerce, Bob went with him. He had filled that role with Rog Morton when he was chairman of the Republican National Committee. It was just a great relationship. They were a marvelous team. So when Rog left the national committee and became Secretary of the Interior, he asked Bob to go along with him. Those executive assistants, those jobs are always non-career, because it's got to be somebody of the same political philosophy as the cabinet officer. He retired in January.

Stein: When he was assistant to Rogers Morton at the national committee, that was when you were working in the campaign?

Hitt: Well, in the first year and a half or so that I was at HEW Rog Morton replaced [W.J.] Hickel. Rog went in as Secretary of the Interior when Hickel was fired, which was fairly well into--a year and a half, anyway, maybe two years--the first Nixon administration. When Hickel was fired, then Rog was appointed Secretary of the Interior. Then Bob went with him there.

About the last year, in about '72, Nixon moved Rog over to Commerce from Interior, and Bob went there with him. Then 'as I said, he retired in January. Between his military service and his government service, he had his twenty years, so he was eligible for retirement, fortunately. If he hadn't, he would have had to leave anyway, because his resignation would have been one of the first ones asked for by the Carter administration.

Family Life

Stein: Then you really didn't have any problems with that question that we always ask everyone, what sort of support or difficulty you had with your family in holding a political office.

Hitt: None. None. Of course, I was fortunate all my life, politically, whether I was in office or a volunteer. I've always been very fortunate in that Bob has always been absolutely supportive. He would be the one that would encourage me to do the things, where I'd say, "Oh, no, I can't do it," whether it was the national committeewoman or the '68 campaign or whatever it is. I'd be the one to say, "Oh no, I can't do it. That's too big a job for me," or "I don't want to leave." He'd be the one to say, "Now look here." So he's always been very supportive.

Hitt: We were fortunate in '68 that he could pick up and leave when I left, or I wouldn't have gone. I wouldn't have gone to Washington in the campaign without him. But he could too, so he just went back and handled the administrative end of the thing.

The same was true of the boys. But I never got into anything that took all that much time until the boys were beyond the point where they needed me. The youngest one was well into high school, you see. I didn't get involved in those things when the kids were still growing up.

Stein: I would imagine that your biggest problem back in Washington would have simply have been finding time, saying more than "hello" to your husband.

Hitt: Yes, it was difficult. Fortunately, his was not a traveling job. He rarely traveled, was rarely on the road, because when Rog was on the road, Bob had to be back manning the shop. If he had been, I don't know when we'd have ever seen each other, because I was. I was on the road, I would say probably a third of the time. If he had been in the same kind of thing, I don't know when we'd ever have jived. But I rarely went out for more than a week at a time. I'd be gone for a week, and then I'd be back home for several weeks and then out a week again, except if it was an extended trip.

But no, I couldn't have done the things I've done. I couldn't have had the kind of life and career I've had if I hadn't had the kind of husband and kids that I have. I just couldn't do it. I look at the husbands of a lot of my friends, and there's no way that they could have done it. But Bob was very understanding.

He laughed at one of the Washington newswomen when we first went back to Washington to campaign. She asked him that usual question, "Well, how do you and the boys feel about it?" The boys weren't there then, but looking at the past--"how do you and the boys feel about Pat being gone so much and on the road?"

He said, "Oh, you know, it's kind of nice to get all the energy out of the house." [Laughter] That would be his rejoinder. That's his whole attitude. Instead of saying, "Well, it's tough, we don't like it, we complain," or anything, he'd made some offhand, amusing kind of a remark. He was not only very supportive, but also very encouraging.

We've talked about it, and he's said, "Look, you've got a lot of drive. You've got capability and everything else. It'd be a crying shame to have it bottled up and wasted at home." He said, "You couldn't fulfill yourself totally as a housewife." You know, a lot of the time we didn't like being separated, but he felt that was important for me to have the chance to do my thing. I was lucky.

Stein: Very lucky. Were you able to participate much in the social scene in Washington?

Hitt: Not too much. We learned early on that you just really can't do both. Now others did and could, where both people weren't working. I know I can certainly understand the problems. Washington's very rough on marriages. I would have to say that Washington's probably the graveyard of more marriages than anyplace else in the world. I can understand why. If you're a congressman or a Senator or you're a government official or something like that, you work like hell. Really, there are long hours of hard work.

If you come home at night, and your wife's been sitting around all day, or she's been with the girls or she's been to the hairdresser and then shopping, she wants to go to all the parties at night. Well, I don't blame her. The social life is all she has.

On the other hand, it's pretty rugged on the person that's working to try to drag out and then be back at the office first thing the next morning. With us, since we were both working, we didn't have that problem. We learned early on that we simply could not party at night during the week and get up and be sharp and pull ourselves together and go to work the next morning.

At first, we tried to do everything. We thought we had to do all the social things. We finally decided there was just no way that we could do it. So we just didn't. During the week, we didn't do very much socially unless it was an early affair. Now, like if the Los Angeles or California Chamber of Commerce or the Bankers' Association was in Washington for two or three days and they had a reception and asked all the Californians in government to come, it would usually be early in the evening or maybe it'd be a dinner. We always went to those. They were friends, there were people that we knew. We did that kind of thing.

Most of our social life was with the people we knew there. They were all working, too, and most of the parties we went to were weekends, Friday night or Saturday night. Rarely Sundays, but during the week, no. There was no time. I went home with a briefcase loaded with work every night that I'd never got to that day.

Fortunately, Bob didn't have to, because his was a different kind of job. What he was doing got done during office hours. He did very little dictation or letter-writing. His was a decision-making process right then on the spot. He very rarely had to read task-force reports and a research material. Mine was a different kind of thing. I had a lot of briefcase work over the weekends, too.

Hitt: Fortunately, I had a good staff. We were close enough and they knew me well enough to know what I'd be looking for. We finally evolved a system whereby either my confidential assistant, who was Jean Hawkins, or my speechwriter and research gal, who was Jodi Baldwin, or one of my two secretaries that worked closely with me--they would do a lot of "marking up" for me. They'd yellow-pencil through key words and sentences. When I'd go home with a seventy-five or eighty page report, I could skim through it. They knew what I was going to need.

When I got Jodi, she was good enough and close enough to me that she could do a great deal of that. The research and the speeches weren't a full-time job for her, so she did lots of marking-up for me, which would help me get through it. So most of what I took home--when I had an airplane trip, I'd take material along to read--but the major part of what I took home with me at night was correspondence. It got so I could mark that up and jot a note and hand it to the secretary the next day and she could do the letters and I'd sign them. It got to the point where I didn't do very much verbatim dictating.

Stein: It's wonderful to have that kind of assistance.

Hitt: Yes, I had a fantastic staff. They would do anything in the world for me, and hours didn't mean a thing. On the other hand, they knew I'd go to bat to any extreme for them. I was lucky.

V REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN IN POLITICS

Stein: I'd like to review some of these women in politics questions I sent you.

Hitt: Yes, I'd like to. They came a couple of days ago and I read them over, but I don't remember what they were now. I glanced over, and I thought, "The night before she comes, I'll go over these in detail," and then I forgot it last night.

Stein: That's perfectly okay. I think we've answered a great many of them already, just chatting about HEW and the Republican party. The first question is about fifty-fifty representation in national and state committees, and if that's really worked in the sense of providing women with a real opportunity for influence in the party, or if it's been cosmetic in the sense that the women who usually get appointed are women who will follow the lead of their male counterparts.

Hitt: I think it's a step in the right direction, because it forces the party to put that many women on. But in the final analysis, it's like everything else. It comes down to the women. If the women are bright, if they've got ideas, if they're articulate, if they're willing to stand up for their cause and not alienate everybody in doing it, then they're going to be effective. But if they're sheep or if they've got chips on their shoulders, all it does is to fill the seats with females. So you can't totally legislate an equal voice in policy, or in anything else. It's got to be earned.

Stein: Has it been your experience, in the women that you've known, that bright, articulate women like yourself have been able to get into these positions?

Hitt: Yes, or they've had their influence. They may not have headed the committee, but believe me, they had their influence in policy, I think. As I said, I think the fifty-fifty representation is important, because it forces them to go look for women and get women on. I think most parties don't consciously put on sheep, because let's face it, if they've got to have them, they're better off to have somebody that's got something to offer instead of somebody that's just going to sit there.

Now some of them will be [sheep], sure, but whether or not they do nothing but fill half the seats with female bodies instead of male bodies or whether they really have an impact depends totally on the individual. It's always going to be. You cannot legislate respect, and you can't legislate ability. You can't just pass a law and say, "You're going to have all these women. They're going to have a major impact," if they haven't got the ability or they don't have the respect and the voice.

But it's an enormously improved situation in the last ten to fifteen years.

Stein: What about the women's division in the party structure? Does that, in your view, act to actually relegate women to a sort of secondary post by putting them off into a separate little organization?

Hitt: Well, I don't think so. Of course, I'm a different generation. I worked within that, and I used it. There's two schools of thought. Now, in the first Nixon campaign, we had a women's organization, a Women for Nixon operation. In the second one, it was all volunteers. I don't know that one was any more effective than the other. The volunteers ended up being mostly all women except that they weren't identified. In a way, I think that's to the detriment of women, because at least in the one where we had a women's organization in that '68 campaign, you could point to what those women did. There was a concrete evidence--you could see it. Where it's all volunteers, you don't know whether it's women, men, kids, what. So I think there's two sides to it.

I never felt that the women's organization relegated women to second place, because there again, you have women in the party and you have women in the party organization. You've got a national committeeman and a national committeewoman from every state. If the woman is outstanding, she's going to be a factor on the national committee. If she's not, she's isn't going to be. So it again gets back to the person. The women's division had specific kinds of things that it did that men couldn't do. I never felt that it relegated me as a woman. If I was active in the women's division, I did an outstanding job. Hell, I was on the men's committees too. I was doing all of it, and I was working the whole thing.

Hitt: When I headed up the women's operation in the '68 campaign, I wasn't just heading up the women's division. I was the co-chairman of the campaign, so I was spending as much time with men as I was with women.

Not all women are working yet. We still have a situation in this country--and I think we probably always will have--where you have women who are housewives, or women at home, and their time is more elastic. They can man the headquarters. They can stuff the envelopes. They can ring the doorbells, or they can go make the speeches. They can do whatever, that a woman who's working can't, unless it's at night.

So we still have coffees. In a campaign, you still have coffees for women in the morning. Well, women who aren't employed can go to the coffees. Working women can't.

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Hitt: The first thing you know, the men are turning to the women's division: we need this done, that done. And nearly always, women's division gets the credit for it. You know, really there isn't anything all that magic about making policy. Rarely is policy made where a group of people just sit down and decide, "We're going to do this." It evolves out of circumstances. It evolves out of the organization you have, or something else. Most policy is made without anybody ever knowing they're making policy, really.

Now, a given thing--where are we going to send the candidate this day? or what's his stand on this going to be?--that kind of policy comes into a campaign. But you practically always have women involved in that today. There are few politicians today that don't realize that they've got to have some smart women with voices in their policy decisions. The rest of it, as I've said, most policy, even governmental policy, evolves without anybody really even knowing that you're making a policy decision. It just happens, because it's logical.

Stein: Well, while we're on the subject of policy, let me ask you another question on this list: do you see the role of the political party as taking clear policy stands, or reconciling different interests, or maybe something else?

Hitt: I see the role of a political party as one of establishing basic political philosophy with a broad general policy framework supporting this philosophy. Within this framework will be differing interests and interpretations of philosophy. Reconciling these differences and establishing common ground out of which policy can be adopted and articulated is the major mission of a political party organization.

Stein: One of the things you just said about women being able to do things that men can't do because they're not working brings up another question: whether women, either in an elected office or in government office, like yourself, bring special assets to an office or different assets, than men do.

Hitt: Yes, I think so. I don't care how much you say, or what you legislate, women don't think exactly the same. They don't look at things exactly the same. Their experiences aren't the same, their reactions aren't the same. I think that women do bring a special quality, a different kind of attitude.

I'll say one thing: I think, generally speaking, women are less apt to fall into dishonest or immoral traps. I really think that maybe it's because at this point all women still aren't fighting the corporate battles. I don't know. But yes, I think women do bring something special and a different dimension, a little bit different kind of an attitude, a different understanding.

I think women are better with people, usually, and more keenly aware of people problems, which leads to another thing.

I think if the major corporate boards and the media and the advertising agencies don't start recruiting more women, they're cutting their own throats. You know, I see things, I see trash in advertising, and I think, my God, no woman would write that or say it that way. She'd know that's not the approach. You know some man wrote that damn thing, that spiel, and yet they're trying to sell a woman's product. You can just tell, because it's not just very real.

I think the same thing is true of corporate boards and everything else. Women are consumers today. Women buy as many automobiles as men. They'd better start talking to some women about what they want in those automobiles and how they want them, what they want. That's just one answer.

Stein: So in other words, women are more plugged in to day-to-day reality?

Hitt: I think so, at least at this stage. Now that may not always be the case, but I think it is at this stage, because the majority of women are still not in the work force, the competitive work force. They may be in the work force, but it's a different kind of work force.

Stein: Yes, not the ulcer-producing work force.

Hitt: No.

Stein: What difference do you think it will make when women are in the ulcer-producing work force? In other words, will they look at issues more like men do, or do you think there will still be a difference?

Hitt: I think there will still be a difference.

Stein: There are several questions here about women seeking public office.

Hitt: Well, of course, I think that's a vastly improved situation. It used to be--I can remember in my earlier days in politics, where almost the only time a women ever ran for office, at least in California, (and I can only speak for California because those days were spent here) the only time a woman ever got a chance to run for the state legislature or Congress was when it was a hopeless contest.

If it was a Republican woman, it was because the district was so hopelessly, predominantly Democrat that no Republican was going to get elected, so no man wanted to waste his time. Then they'd try and look for the woman, some woman who would be willing to give the time to do it in a hopeless race. The same thing was true on the other side, the Democrats.

Stein: The sacrificial-lamb theory.

Hitt: Yes. That's not true any more. Proof of that, I think, is that you're seeing so many more women on city councils and county boards of supervisors. That's not a hopeless kind of a thing. It's not like a congressional district. That's where it ought to start. It's vastly improved. Established women or women who've got it are now having a chance. They can run for any spot they want.

Stein: Do you think that part of the reason for that is that women are now entering in greater numbers the professions which usually lead to public office?

Hitt: Yes, I think so. Also there's a whole different attitude towards women. And women have improved their attitude toward women. One of the greatest stumbling blocks that a woman had twenty years ago was that the women wouldn't vote for her. Women themselves had such a damned inferiority complex about their capabilities outside the home that they felt, "Well, I couldn't do that, so no other woman can do it either." And they wouldn't support them. They didn't have any confidence in women. Well, that's all changed.

I think to a great extent it's the fact that women will support, will get behind, a woman candidate, and a lot of it is because they're not going to college to get married. They're going to learn, they're going into the professions. Not necessarily just law, but any kind. They're getting into business. Sure, I think that has a lot to do with it.

Stein: What differences do you notice between women candidates today as compared to ten or fifteen years ago?

Hitt: They are more self-confident, less apologetic about their candidacy. They are demanding that their qualifications, not their sex, be at issue. They are better qualified, either by education or experience, more articulate. They are running as experienced, capable decision makers, not "housewives."

Stein: It's also been said about women, one of the points that's always been used to put women down in running for office, is that women can't raise campaign funds, that they can't organize a campaign, that they can't handle the stress of the campaign, they fall apart too easily, and that they're too naive intellectually, they can't grasp the larger issues in a campaign.

Hitt: There's only one point there that I would agree with, but the rest of it I think is a lot of rot. Fundraising, it is still true. Women are not as good at major fundraising. Women are marvelous at small fundraising. Men are no good at that at all. But women are simply great at the gimmicks and the small things that it takes to get the dollar, the five dollars, the ten dollars, the fifteen, maybe the twenty-five dollar contribution.

The big contributions, no they aren't, with a few exceptions. I know some outstanding big fundraisers, women, but they are very rare. I only know maybe two or three in the whole state of California.

Stein: We talked about a couple of them last time.

Hitt: But a part of that goes back to the fact that you've got to be in that big corporate finance world to be able to raise big money. You raise it from the people that you're with. You contribute to their things in large amounts, make big contributions to their thing, and they make it to yours. You've got to be in that same level. A housewife or average woman cannot--unless she knows somebody very well, as part of the family--she can't walk in and walk out with a twenty-five thousand dollar contribution.

At the time, when women are serving in those positions, a woman president of General Motors will be just as able to raise big contributions as a man president, from her constituency, from that area.

Generally speaking, women have not been big contributors either, except for women of enormous wealth, widows or something like that. The contributions that they generally make are to colleges and universities and museums and cultural kind of things rather than

Hitt: political campaigns. Mostly when you see a woman's name on the list of campaign contributions--of course, they don't have the great big ones any more--but when you did see them, it was simply because she was the wife of the president of General Motors, and she could give the limit and he could give the limit, so the two went together. But it was his earning power, with the exception of the Clare Booth Luces and a few people like that.

So generally speaking, no. I think there's a certain--well, let me think what I want to say. Big contributions to political campaigns are not achieved by somebody calling somebody's secretary on the phone and making an appointment and walking in the office and saying, "I want this." They're done at the club or they're done in telephone conversation or they're done here or they're done someplace else or it gets to be a habit, and everybody knows, "Well, he contributed so much to my favorite cause or charity. I'm going to have to do for his," or we just naturally know that you go back to him every year and the party brass or the office holders or somebody like that make the contact.

Stein: Getting back to your experiences at HEW, one of the questions we always ask is if the responsibility of managing an office with a large staff and large budget requires special skills that are ordinarily too difficult for women, which is perhaps an inappropriate question for you, because obviously you didn't find it any more difficult than a man.

Hitt: No, but I never had any formal training for it. That may help in the answer. I had never managed a staff or a large budget. I had no formal school training for it, but I found there wasn't really all that much different from a group of volunteers, except that staff couldn't be quite as temperamental. You know, it's hard to sort out how much of what a person is is formal training, school training, and how much is just innate good judgment, how much is a personal attitude, how much is the experiences that you've had or been through. You really can't sort it out. But I think that temperament probably has as much to do with it as anything, and certainly you can't learn temperament.

So no, I definitely do not think that managing a staff, managing a budget, managing pressures--I don't think it makes a darn bit of difference whether you're a man or a woman. I've known men that couldn't manage worth a hoot. No, I think it has nothing to do with sex.

Stein: Were you aware of the whole question of men and women back when you first got involved with politics?

Hitt: No, I never even thought about it. You know, I just was doing my thing. I was aware of the fact that I was almost invariably the only woman in a large group of men when it came to strategy, but I didn't really think all that much about it, because more than anything, I had the time to do it and the inclination and was financially able to do it.

No, I never was really male-female conscious at all until the last few years. It got a lot of public attention. You know, I suppose that way back if I had an opinion or a side to something, and mine didn't prevail, I'd probably figure it was because, "Well, you didn't present it very well." Which I think it probably was, rather than the fact that I was a woman.

Stein: What's been your feeling about some of the things like ERA [Equal Rights Amendment].

Hitt: I vacillate on that one. I really do. You know, I've reached the point where I can almost argue equally as well on either side of the thing, so I just don't get into it. I really could, because I feel so strongly that women should have equal pay for equal work, but I'm not sure that any more legislation is the answer to it. I can see all kinds of problems with the actual legislation of the ERA. I'm not really convinced that the same thing couldn't happen, if people want it to, with what we now have, as what ERA would give us. I think we might get an awful lot we don't want.

Stein: Like what sort of things?

Hitt: [Pause] Well, of course, one that's mentioned all the time that I'm really not even sure of whether it's just emotional or what comes in with the armed services. I don't really think I ever want to see women drafted, if it ever comes back to that again. If they want to pack a rifle, fine, but I don't think I want to see it happen that they were forced into it, or had to. We may never come to it again, but I don't think I want to see every woman between certain ages register for the draft. I really don't know, but given the ERA, would women lose their maternity benefits and privileges and time off in a working situation? I don't know, but conceivably they could, which I think would be unfortunate.

I think part of my problem is that I think that most of us, if we really want to make it count, have got the best of both worlds. I think there are a lot of things that we don't have to do that we don't want to. On the other hand, we do have the recourse, albeit it's not easy to get it, to force equal treatment and equal pay. I'm not sure that it's going to be any easier to force it with legislation. I don't know that legislation is suddenly going to make it any easier, because they'll just change job descriptions and so on.

Hitt: If a woman wants to drive a truck, if she wants to operate a crane, I think that's just fine. But if she doesn't want to, I'd hate to see her lose the opportunity to say, "Well, no I don't want to do that, but I do want to do something else."

If we get to the point, which I think we may someday, where there isn't going to be the easy welfare and support, if you're physically able to work, you're going to have to work. If it isn't exactly what you'd like to do, you're still going to have to do it, or you're going to lose your welfare benefits. If we ever do get to that point, and I don't know that we will, but I think, looking ahead, we might; given the ERA, I think it could very well be, "Well, you go drive that truck or lose your assistance benefits."

I don't know. As I said, I really vacillate on the thing, because I'm not sure how much of my resistance to it is an emotional resistance and how much of it is actual. I'm so afraid of getting caught in the trap of the militant emotional women that I'm concerned about even putting forth a hypothetical example.

When it first came out, in the very beginning, yes, I was very much for it. Then I think one thing that maybe shook my certainty about it is the fact that they've had such a hell of a time passing it, and so many legislatures have gone back on what they want. There's got to be something wrong. I'm afraid that there's got to be something wrong there, because I don't think that all legislators are that chauvinistic.

As I said, early on in that first year, yes, I was all for it. Now I'm not a bit sure I am.

Stein: Of course, there's so much militancy on both sides.

Hitt: That's it.

Stein: It really clouds it. I was just thinking that Phyllis Schlafly is right up there in front--

Hitt: Oh, from the very beginning. She was very much opposed to it from the very beginning. That's why I hesitate to even quote an example. I'm afraid it might be one of hers. As I say, I don't want to fall into that trap, and yet I've seen more and more women for whom I have considerable respect pull away from it, because they've had a lot of second thoughts. I really don't know.

Stein: What about groups like the National Organization for Women and the National Women's Political Caucus and some of those other big women's organizations?

Hitt: What do I think of them?

Stein: Yes.

Hitt: Great! I think let's have them. The National Organization for Women, they're more militant than I am. The National Women's Political Task Force, I'm on that mailing list. I'm not active, I don't belong, but I can't fight anything in their mailings and aims. The League of Women Voters--I just think that we need to have all kinds of organizations, militant, non-militant, whatever, that get women aware of politics and get them interested and get them into it. While I couldn't be a part of all of them, I still think that that's a way of raising the political consciousness of men and women.

There are times when I think that the militants do more harm than good. They drive away more people than they bring in, but we have to have new kinds of organizations, because the old party organizations are just not for most women today, and I don't blame them. Democrats never did have the women's party organizations to compare with the National Federation of Republican Women, but even it is out of the mainstream today! I pay dues to one or two of the NFRW clubs just because I always have and that's a way of supporting them. But I wouldn't be active in it any more.

I made a couple of speeches on my China trip to two or three of the NFRW groups. I look and I think, dear loving God! There are no young women in it, and there are not going to be. They are simply not interesting young women. Working women can't belong to most of them because they have daytime meetings. They're for old ladies. So I think you need anything that gets more women involved in a knowledge and interest in politics. I'm all for it, so long as it stays within the bounds of the law. Now I don't think that I would be in favor of a women's version of the Black Panthers [laughs] or something like that. Not that.

Stein: One final question: some studies have indicated that women in politics are inclined to be more aggressive, stubborn, assertive and outgoing, more imaginative and adventuresome, more free-thinking and analytical than men. Also that they're less self-assured and less self-confident, but less concerned with self-image than men. What have been your perceptions?

Hitt: I agree with all the above findings except for the adjectives stubborn and analytical. Men are at least as stubborn as women but may not appear so on the surface because men are more inclined to go the route of passive resistance or to duck the confrontation and just quietly go ahead and do it their way. Women, on the other hand, will advocate a position or policy and actively pursue a clear-cut, definite decision on the issue at hand.

Hitt: I have found men and women to be equally analytical though the analysis of each in a given question or situation may differ dramatically because each is analyzing from the basis of their own experience.

VI RETURN TO CALIFORNIA

Stein: What I'd like to wrap up with is to go back to you again, and find out what your activities have been since you left HEW.

Hitt: Not very much in a governmental or political sort of a way. I think my days of political campaigning have really, to all intents and purposes, come to an end. If there's a candidate I really believe in, I may contribute financially. But I'm fairly chary about the use of my name any more. In other words, I'm no longer at that point where I endorse all Republican candidates, no matter what, and work for all of them. I just don't spend that much time.

I've reached the point where I'm no longer willing to give as much time as the major role in a political campaign requires to do the kind of a job I'd be happy or satisfied with. I'm just not going to do it any more. I'm enjoying some leisure time, Bob and I doing things together.

Also, let's face it, I've lived and worked and campaigned in one era. Things are different now. Attitudes are different. Except in an advisory capacity in a campaign, I'm not sure I'd know how to go out and appeal to young women, to get them to get into it or do their thing. I'm not sure I could do it with my heart in it, if I knew what it was. So from that standpoint, I think the Finch campaign for U.S. Senate was probably the last campaign I'll ever do.

I just had a letter from Bill Brock asking me to go on the advisory committee for the national committee. I haven't yet decided if I'm going to do that or not.

Really, when I left Washington I was kind of tired out and burned out. I made up my mind I was not going to come back and get back into the old syndrome of the federated clubs and the central committee. I don't need all those fights and all that controversy and all that emotionalism any more. No, thank you.

Hitt: In all good conscience, I can say it's somebody else's turn because I think I've done my share of it. So I don't feel an obligation any more, that if you don't like what's going on, do something about it. I'll do it, but in a different sort of a way. I like free time. I have grandchildren now, I like to see them, I like to work on my yard. I just really don't want that kind of pressure and hard long hours. I would no more drive back and forth to Los Angeles five or six days a week to work in a headquarters on a campaign now than fly! I'm not sure if I'd do it if the campaign headquarters were in the other end of Orange County, day after day after day.

I still am interested in civic and community service. I really have gone back almost to where I started in the first place. I'm a trustee of Chapman College and I'm very active in it. I never miss a meeting of the board of trustees or the executive committee of the board of trustees if I'm in town. I'm trustee of Orthopedic Hospital in Los Angeles and I thoroughly enjoy it. I've no intention of letting that go.

I helped to organize and was the first president of a new support group here for the Laguna Beach School of Art, which is a community involvement. I just said that I would go on the board for the newly organized Orange County Chapter of the National Council of Christians and Jews.

I really am coming back to the more people-involved, less political, community-involved activities, which I can do and still reserve my free time. I'm not going on any more major boards or trusteeships that require a monthly meeting unless I get paid for it. A corporate board, yes. I would do that if there were remuneration. But I'm not going to give up any more of my own private time, just for the pure satisfaction of doing it.

That's come up on several occasions. A corporate board--if I've got something they need, or there's something up here that's of value of them, then they can pay for it.

Stein: Well, I can well understand, with these beautiful surroundings, not wanting to leave here.

Hitt: Yes. And then too, I'll be sixty years old in January. I think okay, I'm in the last third, or something like that. I want to do some of the things that I've been wanting to do and haven't done all these other years, and just take it a little easier.

Stein: Where did the trip to China fit into all that?

Hitt: It was a private trip sponsored by one of two groups of women that I belong to. That's their purpose: exchange trips and delegations to foreign countries to learn about them and let them learn about

Hitt: us, the premise being that, really, the only way that we can ever be sure of achieving real world peace is understanding each other as people. Somewhat of a live and let live attitude. It happens that I'm not really sympathetic to Carter's big--

Stein: The human rights?

Hitt: Yes, the big push on that. I'm not, because I really don't think that it's all that much of our business, as a government, what another government does. I look at it this way: we as Americans would be up in arms if Gromyko or anybody else were attempting to tell us how we should run our country. Does that mean that we have a right to tell them? I have never believed that we have a right to force our government on other countries, and I don't believe that we have a right to force our philosophy on them.

Anyway, this one group I belonged to was able to get permission to go into China. I had missed it five years ago when they went for the first time. It was in the '72 presidential campaign and I couldn't walk off and leave it. So I said, "If you ever get another group in, I want to go." I went as a private citizen. I gave many talks on the trip when I came back, because it was an incredible experience. I never want to go back to Russia, but I very much want to go back to China.

It was a great learning experience. This group goes not to talk to the top people, but to talk to people--hundreds of people, albeit through an interpreter. A lot of dialogue was party line, sure, but you learn a lot. I'm sure that we had an impact on the women that we met, and the men that we met, the same as they had on us.

China has been an enigma to most people for the last twenty-five or thirty years. We haven't known what's going on. Well, having seen it and having gotten some impression, I really felt an obligation to pass on what I've learned.

##

Hitt: Not very many people get there. Because it is a major power, we do have to live with it. We are opening things up. So I've given many, many speeches and still have a lot of them scheduled next fall, to Rotary Clubs, to support groups, to hospital groups, to organizations I belong to, just on that. Now there again, I'm giving of my time, but that's temporary.

Stein: Have you written anything about it?

Hitt: No, I'm going to at some point. I've got to. All I have now are my rough notes and speech notes that I work from. But I thought at some time, whenever I get time, hopefully while it's still reasonably fresh, I would like to get it down. I would like to get it down in journal form just for my kids or whatever some day, because we really had an exceptional experience. I've heard other people speak before and after I made this trip, and they didn't even begin to get out of their tours what we did, or learn as much.

Stein: Was this trip like the Russia trip, in a sense that you talked to women that were involved in the same sorts of activities as you were?

Hitt: Somewhat, but not as specialized. Mostly we were touring communes and schools and the University of Peking. We spent half a day there. There are underground shelters and evacuation facilities in Peking, which are typical of all of the major cities. Factories, seeing them at work, talking to the people. In every place, everything we toured, we had anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half briefing session before, where we were told what we were going to see and we could ask questions and so on.

There was one thing I had asked. I had said that I would like, in one of the major cities, either Peking, Shanghai or Canton, to meet with city planners if they had any such thing. I said my first choice would be Shanghai, because I knew that Shanghai, because of the nature of the city, the old international settlements and everything else, would be a real challenge if they were trying to do anything. I wanted to know if they were trying to do anything. So we did have a half of a morning with the city planner, the head of the equivalent of our city planning commission in Shanghai. It was fascinating to learn what they've done, where they're going, how they're trying to work it out, what they're doing with parks, what they're doing with schools, how they're trying to build housing near factories, setting up satellite cities, getting the major polluting factories out of the city and into the countryside, and increasing public transportation.

On the Russian trip, while we did many tours, my meetings were mostly with government leaders. In this one, they were not. There were very few individual meetings, almost all group meetings. Everybody talked to the doctors, everybody talked to the--well, they don't have lawyers and courts such as we do, but we did get to talk to the law professors at Peking University to get some idea of their legal system. Whatever we did, we all did as a group, with just the one exception.

Stein: I think we'd better stop there. Thank you for setting aside this time for us; this will be a valuable addition to our Women Political Leaders series.

Guide to Tapes -- Patricia Hitt

tape 1, side A	1
tape 1, side B	11
tape 2, side A	20
tape 2, side B	31
tape 3, side A	39
insert from tape 9, side A	41
end of insert, tape 9, side A	50
resume tape 3, side A	51
insert from tape 9, side A	53
end of insert, tape 9, side B	54
resume tape 3, side A	54
tape 3, side B	60
tape 4, side A	71
tape 4, side B	82
insert from tape 9, side A	88
end of insert, tape 9, side A	88
resume tape 4, side B	89
tape 5, side A	92
tape 5, side B	102
tape 6, side A	112
tape 6, side B	117
tape 7, side A	126
tape 7, side B	137
tape 8, side A	147
tape 8, side B	157
tape 9, side B	169
tape 10, side A	176
tape 10, side B	186
tape 11, side A	197
tape 11, side B	208
tape 12, side A	219

INDEX -- Patricia R. Hitt

- ACTION Agency, Peace Corps, 165-166
 Adkins, Bertha, 32
 Agnew, Spiro, 139-140
 Ahmanson, Howard, 67-68
 Arbuthnot, Ray, 67
- Baeskins, Lelia Eastman, 26, 39-32, 56
 Baldwin, Jodie, 151-152, 205
 Bassett, James, 105
 Beaver, Robert and Dorothy, 55-56
 Bellman, Henry, 43, 134-135
 Benedict, Marjorie, 32-33, 88-89
 Bewley, Tom, 58-59, 61, 63
 Bowler, Ann, 33
 Brock, Margaret Martin, 79
 Bronson, William, 199
 Burns, Barbara, 198-199
- California Democratic Council (CDC), 103-104
 California Republican Assembly (CRA), 126-127
 California Republican League, 127-128
 Carlucci, Frank, 162
 Carpenter, Dennis, 55-56
 Chambers, Ray, 179, 199
 Chandler, Dorothy, 106
 Chotiner, Murray, 38, 59-62, 95-96
 Christina, Vernon, 123-124
 Clarke, Athalie, 79
 Cohen, W.J., 184
 Colson, Charles, 166
- Day, Roy, 59
 Delehanty, George, 55
 Douglas, Helen Gahagan, 59-62
- Eastman, Lelia. See Baeskins, Lelia Eastman
 Ehrlichman, John, 92, 163-167, 181
 election campaigns (California)
 (1958) gubernatorial, 68-71
 (1964) senatorial, 114-123
 (1966) lieutenant governor, 36-38, 129-133

election campaigns (national)

(1960) presidential, 89-97

(1968) presidential, 98-99, 133-158. See also Republican party (national)

Ellsworth, Robert, 134-135

Elston, Dorothy, 43, 49-50

Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), 213-215

Farrell, Robert, 72

Federation of Republican Women (California), 26-41, 127

Federation of Republican Women (national), 40-51

Finch, Robert, 82, 92, 100, 103, 138-139, 168

Lieutenant Governor, California, campaign (1966), 36-38, 129-133

Secretary, Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, 160-161, 182, 184-186

Fisher, Audrey, 125

Ford, Gerald, 131

Frawley, Patrick, 114, 116

Frizzelle, Nolan, 127

Fuller, Jean Wood, 32

Gallagher, Ann, 126

Gary, Dorothy, 37, 39-40

Goldwater, Barry, 102, 112-113, 123

Goodnight, Dorothy, 34-36, 41, 43-46, 129

Greenberg, Carl, 105

Halley, James, 123-124

Haldeman, Robert, 92, 103, 181

Hall, Leonard, 92

Hatch Act, 200-201

Hawkins, Jean, 151-152, 205

Health, Education, and Welfare, Department of (1969-1972), 159-206

child care programs, 193-195

Community and Field Services, Regional Offices, 169-172

consumer education, 195-196

delegations abroad, 186-191

Model Cities program, 174

Office of Mental Retardation, 172-173

Office of Student and Youth Affairs, 172

protests, women's rights, 192-193

school integration policy, 183-186

staff, 196-202

volunteer action program, 191-192

Herman, Ab, 47-48

Hillings, Patrick J., 60, 81, 93-94

Hitt, Patricia Reilly

education, 3, 8-17; high school, 8-13; University of Southern California, 13-17

employment, nursery school, 22-24; Assistant Secretary, Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1969-72), 159-205

family, parents' background, 1-11; marriage (Frank Hamilton), 18, 24; marriage (Robert Hitt), 19; children, 18-22; political support of, 73-77, 133-134, 202-205

political activity, Federation of Republican Women, 25-51; Republican party, California state central committee, 51-52; Orange County central committee, 51-56; early precinct work, 66-67; Republican National Committeewoman, 74-76, 80-90, 107-113; delegate Republican national convention (1960), 80-89; Republican National Committee, executive committee, 99; organizing George Murphy campaign (1964), 116-121; Women for Nixon (1968), 133-158; refusal to run for office, 77-78

post-political activities (1972-), 217-220

Hitt, Robert, 19, 134, 157-158, 201-205

Hosmer, Lucile, 32-35, 84-86

Hutar, Pat, 41, 43-49

Jarvis, Howard, 96

John Birch Society

and 1962 California gubernatorial election, 100-101

Orange County, California, 52-55, 94-95

Kamp, Joseph, 70

Kennedy, Jacqueline, 93

Kennedy, Joan, 90-92

Kent, Roger, 103

Kenyon, Cecil, 83-86

Knauer, Virginia, 173-174

Knight, Goodwin, 68-72

Knowland, Helen, 69-70

Knowland, William, 68-72, 110-111, 123-125

Knowles, Robert, 108

Krotz, Virla, 35-36

Kuchel, Tom, 89, 115-116

Lindsay, Inabel, 196-197

Lodge, Henry Cabot, 140

Lombardi, Angela, 36-37

London, Dan, 107-108

McCall, Harrison, 59
 Martin, Joseph, 83, 87, 122
 Mead, Mildred, 156
 Mexican-Americans, 174-175
 Milias, George, 83, 86-87
 Mitchell, John, 135, 139, 144-145
 Morton, Rogers, 201-202
 Murphy, George
 senatorial campaign (1964), 114-123

National Organization for Women, 215
 National Women's Political Task Force, 215
 Niebank, Paul, 199
 Nixon, Patricia Ryan, 17
 Nixon, Richard, 17, 52, 159-160, 163, 181
 1946 congressional campaign, 57-59
 1950 senatorial campaign, 59-62
 1952 vice presidential campaign, "The Fund" crisis, 62-66
 1960 presidential campaign, 89-97
 1962 California gubernatorial campaign, 100-107
 1968 presidential campaign, 133-158
 Watergate scandal, 164, 167-169

O'Donnell, Gladys, 32-35, 81-82, 84-85, 129
 battle for presidency National Federation of Republican Women, 40-50
 1958 California gubernatorial campaign, 68-70

Palmer, Kyle, 105
 Panetta, Leon, 185
 Parkinson, Gaylord, 42
 Peace Corps, 165-166
 Peterson, Eleanor, 32, 141
 Pierce, Robert, 108
 Pike, Emily, 105

Reagan, Bruce, 122
 Reagan, Ronald,
 1966 California gubernatorial campaign, 129-132
 1968 presidential bid, 136-138
 Reilly, John, 59, 63-64
 Republican party (California)
 "The Big Switch," (1958), 68-72
 conservative faction, 123-129
 state central committee
 1954 elections, 67-68
 1968 elections, 123-126
 women in campaigns, 119-121
 see also Federation of Republican Women

- Republican party (national)
 - 1960 convention, 80-89
 - 1964 convention, 107-113
 - 1968 convention, 136-140
 - 1968 presidential campaign, organization, 42-43, 98-99, 133-158
- Richardson, Elliott, Director, Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, 160-161
- Richmond, Gordon, 25
- Rockefeller Mission to South America, 189-190
- Rousselot, John, 94
- Rumford Fair Housing Act (1964), 121-122

- Salinger, Pierre, 90
- Salvatori, Henry, 130
- Sandstrom, Elsa, 34
- Schlaflly, Phyllis
 - battle for presidency, National Federation of Republican Women, 40-51
 - and in opposition to Equal Rights Amendment, 214
- Seaver, Blanche, 79-80
- Seeley, Howard, 39
- Shattuck, Edward, 71-72, 83
- Shell, Joseph, 52, 100-102, 132-133
- [Smith], Lee Sherry, 125
- Solano, Al, 174-175
- Stevens, Edward, 196

- Thomas, Stanley B., 178, 199
- Timmons, William, 47
- Trotter, Virginia, 173-174
- Tubman, William
 - funeral, 186-189
- Tuttle, Holmes, 130

- United Republicans of California (UROC), 126-127
- Utt, James, 51

- Veneman, John, 129-132
- Volpe, John, 139
- Voorhis, Jerry, 58

- Weinberger, Caspar, 122-124
 - Director, Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, 161-164
- Whittaker and Baxter, public relations, 93-94
- Williams, Clare, 32
- Woods, Rose Mary, 63-64, 82, 141

Women for Nixon-Agnew (1968), 135-136, 143-158
 campaign devices, 149-150, 154-155
 campaign literature, 155-156
 fundraising, 144-148
 membership statistics, 153
women in politics
 as fundraisers, 78-80, 211-212
 in Nixon presidential administration, 173-174, 176-183
 in political parties, 73, 206-210
 in public office, 210-211

Miriam Feingold Stein

B.A., Swarthmore College, 1963, with major in history
M.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1966, in American
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Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976, in American
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Field services and oral history for the State Historical
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Instructor: American history, women's history, and
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